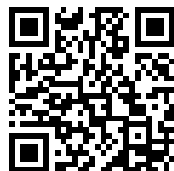

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With the
2nd Cape Corps
thro'
Central Africa.

BY
A. J. B. DESMORE.

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**WITH THE 2ND CAPE CORPS THRO'
CENTRAL AFRICA.**

DEDICATION.

To my Father.

THE AUTHOR.

*With the 2nd Cape Corps thro'
Central Africa.*

BY

A. J. B. DESMORE.

CITADEL PRESS,
CAPE TOWN,
1920.

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PREFACE.

Although in minor details I have had to rely on information from very meagre and sometimes unreliable sources, the facts contained in the following narrative form, nevertheless, an authentic record of the history of the Second Battalion Cape Corps.

My very special thanks are due to a former master and friend, who very kindly undertook the revision of the MSS. Amongst those others whom I desire to thank, both for moral and practical support in the production of this work, may be mentioned the following: J. W. Mushet, Esq., M.L.A.; Lieut.-Colonel M'Cluskie, Messrs. R. W. Wooding, Geo. Gibbs, and all those who assisted actively towards the extension of the sale of this publication. My thanks are also due to the manager of the Citadel Press, Mr. F. W. Ingram, for his courtesy in publishing this book.

ABE J. B. DESMORE.



THE AUTHOR.

(Photo by E. A. Payne).

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

The formation of a fighting regiment composed of Coloured men was of the nature of a doubtful experiment, considered in local military circles to be outside the realms of practicability, and, at first, the prayer of the Coloured community to be allowed to take their share in the toils of the Great War fell on deaf ears. At last the Imperial Government took the "risk" upon themselves, and the First Battalion of the Cape Corps was born after a lingering travail.

Another book has undertaken to treat of this splendid regiment: of the creditable manner in which they took to military exercises, their willingness to undergo military discipline, and the keenness with which they looked forward to active service; how they embarked for the field, did for a long time the work of a labour regiment on lines of communication, and kicked up their heels with impatience to get a tug at the Hun; of their good fortune in getting into the line, where they distinguished themselves like the fine fellows they were, and from whence they returned laden with honours; and, finally, of their pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where they showed aptitude for technical studies in the military schools, and, like the Crusaders of old, crowned their record with that brilliant achievement, the taking of Square Hill.

While a great deal has been done to give publicity to the doings of the First Battalion, little or nothing has been done to give the public a glimpse into the nature of the work done by the Second Battalion. It is with this regiment that it is proposed to deal in the following chapters.

The writer will endeavour to show how keen the men of this regiment were on soldiering under conditions oftentimes adverse, though sometimes not unpleasant. He will depict their weary waiting in Nyasaland, where they did post duty, while undergoing at the same time strenuous courses of training. He will portray their pursuit of the enemy in the rainy season, where they daily experienced continuous downfalls of rain. He will follow them in that long and arduous chase, when they frequently brushed against the rear-guard of the enemy, and drove before them the whole of Von Lettow's force for almost two hundred miles of broken and bushy country, completing that stupendous task after six weeks in the slush and rain of a dreary winter. He will tell of their bitter disappointment at the miscarriage of the scheme to wedge in the enemy at the Lugenda, through the failure of Hawthorn's column to come up in time. And last, but by no means least, he will introduce to the reader the "Tenga Tenga," those fine black fellows who played so prominent a part in this campaign, that it came to be known as the "Tenga Tenga War."

There are certain things, which, though true, are out of place in a book which aims only at straightforward narrative. Such he has carefully avoided, and, if he notes them, has refrained from comment. For instance, he has omitted the delicate question of the introduction of an obsolete form of discipline into the regiment—namely, flogging. He has passed without comment the attitude taken up by the authorities in not extending the privilege of non-commissioned promotion to the rank-and-file. And he has, in general, avoided what a friend called "grievance-mongering." His sole aim is to give a faithful picture of work faithfully done.

CHAPTER I.

A LITTLE ABOUT RECRUITING.

It will be well for the general reader to consider briefly something of the Coloured people, from whom the recruits of the Cape Corps were drawn.

The bulk of these people, together with the Natives, form the labouring class of South Africa. The latter claim the mines as their own peculiar sphere, while the former are mainly employed as farm labourers, and, in a lesser degree, in the skilled trades in the towns, where they successfully compete with their white brothers in efficiency.

Forming part of the labouring class they have very robust physique. Combined with their splendid physique, they have perseverance and a power of endurance, which are not easily daunted. These qualities, together with that of a marked cheerfulness under extreme circumstances, make them natural soldiers. Therefore, it is not surprising that the response to the call for recruits was good.

The recruits for this Battalion amounted to approximately one thousand two hundred. The largest number of these was drawn from the agricultural districts. This naturally enabled the Cape Province to contribute more than the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Natal put together. Almost every train from the North brought its batch of warriors to Cape Town, and the City Hall there was the daily scene of much excitement.

In addition to the ordinary methods of recruiting, the authorities organized in various centres what came to be known as "recruiting rallies." If, nothing else stirred the heart to patriotism, and roused the indifferent to action, these patriotic demonstrations were most successful.

The men of both battalions often took part in these rallies. On such occasions a brass band was in attendance, or, as an alternative, the drum-and-fife band of a local branch of the Church Lads' Brigade. But the Battalion was not long in procuring its own drum-and-fife band, which from then onwards invariably assisted the recruiting.

The band instruments were obtained as the result of liberal subscription among the Officers. It was a very easy matter to find players, because the Coloured people are passionately fond of music, and naturally adapt themselves to that art. Besides, a goodly number of the men of both Battalions hailed from the ranks of the Church Lads' Brigade. To this also, no doubt, is attributable their ready adaptability to military customs and discipline.

The first evening after the instruments had been procured the band was moving up and down on the parade ground, when suddenly the whole camp was agog with excitement and swarming with inquisitive khaki spectators. The clerical staff left their unweighted papers to the whims of a slight South-Easter and rushed to the doors of their various departments. Thence, unable to see the novel spectacle, they rushed to the centre of attraction. N.C.O. cooks abandoned their cookers to the tender mercies of inexperienced privates, running the risk that night of eliciting muttered curses from the lines. And officers—that set of superior individuals in whose make-up might be found all else but the vice

of curiosity—even officers left the calm of their secluded quarters, and scrambled over one another like a pack of schoolboys in their haste to look upon the scene. In the hum-drum life of a camp it takes very little to excite a crowd to jollity, and so all were out to enjoy themselves in this innovation.

For a set of men picked out at random from the hundreds in camp, the band was a great success. Of the two most interesting figures among them, one was the drummer, a tall six-footer, who was aproned in the skin of a real tiger and reared majestically above the heads of the others. The other was a bugler, who had been discharged from the First Battalion on account of bad feet. He reluctantly answered to the name of "Voete," owing, no doubt, to the largeness of his feet. He was below the average height. This, with his peculiar gait (occasioned by his feet seeming to take divergent courses when on the march), contrasted humorously with the giant of the drum, he who strutted so pompously.

The dwarf, however, proved of no mean value in training new buglers, and it was his proud boast that he knew all the ordinary calls from "Reveille" to "Lights Out," not to mention such fancy calls as the "Sergeants' Mess" and "Rum Call," the latter of which he could do extremely well, and his persistent use of the former almost got the European staff into serious trouble once.

It happened like this. While stationed in Nyasaland, at Limbe, we lived in huts, and it was customary for officers to add a little ornamental railing or wind-screen to their huts, possibly to distinguish theirs from those of the ordinary kitchen garden privates and N.C.O.'s. For want of originality the European non-coms. resorted to copying the officers, and had some beautiful wind-

WITH THE 2ND CAPE CORPS

screens made round their own huts. One evening the dwarf-bugler sounded the "Sergeants' Mess," and the then second in command, Major M'C——, came rushing from his kiaha like mad and enquired from the bugler why he sounded that call. Noticing apparently for the first time the unusual ornamentation around the huts of the Staff-Sergeants, he did not wait for an explanation from the agitated bugler, but rushed like a whirlwind towards the Sergeants' Mess hut. I thought he would have fallen upon the offenders in righteous indignation, but he suddenly stopped, thrust his hands to his side and in a sneering and contemptuous Scotch brogue, which must have chilled the hearts of those within, exclaimed, "The lair-r-ds of the Manor-r, the Head - Quar-r-ter-r - Ser-r-geants," turned about and marched back to his hut. The next day those beautiful wind-screens disappeared from the shrines of the demi-gods. But this is forestalling the proper sequence of events.

. CHAPTER II.

TRAINING AT WOLTEMADE.

The preliminary training was taken up in the "lines" of the First Battalion, until the numbers grew large enough to make a separate camp. While there we had the benefit of being trained under the instructorship of an austere but fatherly old Sergeant-Major. He was familiarly but secretly known by the name of "O dear," from his habit of using this expletive, when vexed at the stupidity of recruits. He was a fine specimen of a British soldier. Himself erect to a fault, he intensely disliked an unsoldierly bearing.

The recruits of the early days of the recruiting campaign all passed through his hands, and, from his own experience, he formed the opinion that the most undesirable recruits came from "District VI." Hence, he showed a keen aversion towards all who hailed from that quarter.

The first thing he did, when a new man arrived, was to enquire where he had lived. The unsuspecting recruit, should he have come from any undesirable region, would get in for a hot time. "O Dear," too, had an instinctive dislike for "rokers" (dagga smokers), of whom there was a goodly sprinkling amongst the men, and who acted as a really bad influence. In order to detect such, he lined up all new-comers, and made an examination of their mouths and teeth. By what subtle signs he distinguished the ordinary soldier from the "roker" is unknown to me. Yet, he did. I remember on one occasion he approached a certain man with that

stealthy cat-like movement so characteristic of him. This man had been previously warned by his friends of the extraordinary detective powers of the Sergeant-Major, and when he noticed the steady gaze of the old man focussed upon himself, he became so alarmed that he suddenly took to his heels and disappeared into the plantation. The rascal never returned to camp again, nor did "O Dear" think it worth while to have him back. Yes, he was an irritable old man, but we never regretted having passed through his hands.

Beside the old Sergeant-Major there were some N.C.O.'s from Imperial regiments stationed locally at the time who were appointed to train our men. They carried out their work so creditably that they earned the deep gratitude of all. The men had taken to soldiering in no half-hearted a manner. When these instructors were withdrawn from time to time, as their regiments left for some theatre or other of the war, they were replaced by men, the majority of whom had never before been on active service, and, perhaps, what was worse, had never previously donned a uniform or sloped a rifle. That this should have happened was rather a pity, for in the adjoining camp there was a number of willing and very capable instructors from the rank-and-file of the First Battalion. In this way the training of the new Battalion was seriously hampered and its progress retarded. The more advanced men, who had gained the rank of Corporal, were ordered to give all assistance to these instructors, or "Staff-Sergeants," as they were styled. Even the ordinary man in the ranks could see the injustice of it all, and the men were growing very discontented, when one evening the crisis was reached.

One of these "Staff-Sergeants," who had only been in camp for a matter of six weeks, struck a defaulter, one of a party doing pack-drill *with sand in their valises*. The men, who had been doubling for some time and showed signs of fatigue, slowed down, not being able to carry on; when this man, using a sjambok, struck one of them across the calves of the legs. A fracas took place, which was quelled only with the greatest difficulty, and by an assurance to the men that justice would be meted out to the offender, who had meanwhile beaten a hasty retreat to his tent in order to save his skin.

After a Court-Martial it was suggested from the Castle "that a man who struck a soldier and then pleaded ignorance was not the kind of man that the Union Defence Force would require as an instructor, nor, in fact, could he have the amount of military experience required before a man is promoted to such a responsible position." This is by no means a solitary example, but, in justice to those instructors who did play the game, it must be acknowledged, that there were one or two truly sympathetic veterans amongst them.

But life in camp had its humorous side as well. When the writer arrived in camp for the first time he was given duty in the Orderly-Room as clerk. In charge of the clerical staff at the time was a stout Sergeant-Major, who was noted for his good nature and geniality, but who was always on the lookout for taking men down "a peg or two," as he called it. One day he suddenly took off his tunic, and, addressing himself to me, said, "Here, leave off that scribbling and clean these buttons"—tossing his tunic across to me. I at once realised that he was talking to me, but pretended I did not know, when he came up to me and asked "what the devil I meant by not com-

plying with a military order?" and would, no doubt, have proceeded to quote section and paragraph so-and-so of King's Regulations had I not immediately resigned myself to my fate. My first inclination was to refuse point-blank, but I thought better after. Taking up the tunic I proceeded to clean my lord's buttons, and took great care to apply as much of the Silvo to the khaki drill as to the brass buttons themselves, with the result that the tunic was so messed up that the only recognition I earned was a disgusted "damn" from the Sergeant-Major, who vowed he would never again entrust me with such important work as cleaning his buttons. But the writer was quite happy, for he had succeeded with strategy, where an outright offensive movement would certainly have failed. Notwithstanding this incident we both became fast friends after that.

Again, the writer recalls a very disconcerting experience he went through the first night in camp. The recruits who had been brought in that day were all flocking round the "dixie" of "skoff" like a pack of hungry wolves. A soldier, who was dishing out the contents in a not very appetising manner, seeing him took pity. The man dipped his hand into the receptacle and extracted therefrom a huge chunk of beef, and invited him to have it with a be-off-now attitude. His first thought was to refuse the bounty, but on reflection took it gratefully enough. What a rude awakening this was may be left to the imagination of the reader!

CHAPTER III.

THE CAMP AT WOLTEMADE.

After a time life in camp became very monotonous. Recruits streamed in daily, and it was daily more necessary to turn the screw of discipline more tightly. Men, ignorant of military law, and unused to the restrictions of military discipline, practically carried on as they liked, when off parade and away from the stern eye of the Sergeant-Instructor. The orderly-room was crowded each morning with offenders for drunkenness and camp-breaking. The Provost Staff proved hopelessly inadequate to cope with the latter evil. Men left and returned as they listed. They could not realise that they were soldiers, and, therefore, subject to restrictions. The Provost Staff was increased, and pickets were stationed at all points, where the men congregated, but still the O.C. could not put a stop to the trouble.

However, let it be understood that this was almost the only fault of which the men were guilty. Besides, the situation was rather aggravated by the effects of having the camp in close proximity to a large town, accessible almost as easily on foot as by rail.

The whole atmosphere surrounding a soldier ought to be conducive to discipline. If this is true of soldiers in general, it certainly is so of this regiment in particular. Attracted by the alluring pleasures of a city like Cape Town, the men did not take kindly to confinement in camp. Only a certain percentage

were given permission to leave camp at one time, and yet the town was always crowded with members of the regiment.

During night training, which was at first done under very lax supervision, these truants always took the chance of breaking camp, and made use of military movements to further their own ends. At the command to scatter every man must face outwards, and, doubling, extend to the left and right respectively of the road into the bush. When the "close-in" whistle blew the result of the scatter was only too apparent, and those who were absent usually complied with the command in the small hours of the next morning. Thus the term "camp-breaking" became synonymous with that of "extending orders," and thenceforth all would-be truants spoke of "extending."

During our stay at Woltemade disturbances in the city were regrettably frequent; though, in justice to the regiment, it must be said that the men were not by any means always the first offenders. Very often quarrels were most unjustly picked by a few prejudiced members of the police, civil and military. So often did a fracas take place that the name of the Second Cape Corps became a byword; but the authorities soon recognised that under such circumstances as there existed their conduct could hardly have been otherwise. Placed in a camp with an environment less attractive, these same men would have acted in a different manner, and have learnt the elementary practice of discipline sooner, in spite of the few wasters, the necessary evil of any community.

Perhaps it was a pity that the men frequented Cape Town so much, for the police, both civil and military, were ever on the alert to provoke the

truants, and often went out of their way to demand passes from them in public thoroughfares, knowing full well that the proper place where to demand such was at the main gate of the camp and not at the entrance to Cape Town Station.

The writer remembers watching one of these bullies, a big burly policeman of The Castle, going up to a respectable Corporal, who was walking out with a lady in front of Adderley Street Station, and demanding a pass. Wishing to obviate a scene, he produced his pass, very much to the chagrin of the bully.

Another unfortunate man, who could not produce a pass, and had refused to be taken in custody was led a fearful five minutes by a similar gang of these police. Thrown to the ground by them, he was trampled upon, kicked about, and beaten with a heavy military belt till the blood streamed from his face. No wonder one of the officers of the First Battalion, happening on the scene, threw off his Sam Browne, and exclaiming, "There lies the Captain (pointing to his belt) and here stands M——," gave the lot of them such a trouncing that they did not stand to receive their well-merited deserts, but scattered in all directions, leaving such trophies as caps and belts behind them, these proving valuable evidence against them next morning. It will serve no good purpose to go on quoting other instances, but be it known that these could be multiplied indefinitely.

CHAPTER IV.

EMBARKATION.

The events dealt with in the previous chapter, together with the insanitary condition of the camp at Woltemade, no doubt led to the sudden and, as it seemed, premature departure of the regiment from the Cape.

While mentioning this latter fact, it must be admitted, that Woltemade might have been made into a very congenial camp. In many respects it was especially fitted for the training of a new battalion. Its extensive parade ground, with its setting of green plantations, giving facilities for field operations in miniature, and its convenient musketry ranges both helped, as far as their usefulness went, to make it an ideal camp. The scarcity of water was, however, a very serious matter. Very often days went by without the pleasure of a face-wash, let alone the luxury of a bath. To the few who were accustomed to this sort of life before enlistment this was undoubtedly an excellent arrangement, and to the soldier whose home was in Cape Town, it served as an excellent excuse for breaking camp.

Of course, lack of water meant lack of a bath, and the lack of a bath meant, well—only the old soldier knows. If the writer expected to be attacked by companies of a certain parasitical species in the field he was completely taken by surprise when the unexpected took place only eight miles from Cape Town. Indeed, he had not realised that the enemy had moved until explaining the creepy feeling to one of the men, which brought from him, “O gonna, Corporal, dat is ——.” But he did not wait to hear the rest. The exclamation of the man completely

stunned him. The pouring of shrapnel suddenly into the ranks of an unsuspecting party of German askaris could not have demoralized them more completely than this verdict did him. The pronouncement of the death sentence for the crime of murder could not have stunned him more. Imagine the feelings of a suicide before his plunge into the cold current of a river—and into eternity. He felt like that then.

Rushing to the seclusion of his tent, he there divested himself of all garments. Was it said that *companies* participated in the attack? No, surely *regiments* must have done so; for, as he gingerly took the things one by one and dropped them on the floor, they literally moved! Ugh! What an awful sensation, and all for the lack of a sufficient supply of water.

It was rumoured that we were to leave soon, and several farewell concerts were held in camp. As we generally gauged the time of departure from these social events, we expected to leave at any moment. The definite time of the moving of the first batch was, therefore, uncertain, not without amusing results.

The friends of a young Corporal, thinking the first batch was to leave on a certain day, gave him a farewell party on the eve of the day on which he was supposed to leave. After spending a very enjoyable time he had at last to go. The daughter of the house, a very serious-minded and sedate young lady, kissed him goodbye, at his request, and after a great deal of demurring. Imagine the confusion and blushes of the young damsel the next evening, when the Corporal returned to say that the party had been premature, and that the order for embarkation had been postponed at the last moment!

Late one afternoon the order was passed around to pack up immediately. Not a word was said as to our ultimate destination. It was generally understood that the first draft was to leave about noon on the morrow. Early next day the order came to fall in with packs, and we were marched to the platform of Woltemade No. 3, where, as luck would have it, a few friends were waiting to see us off.

We shall never forget that day, when we were taken away to an unknown fate. We were all in high spirits; not so the friends who were there to bid us farewell.

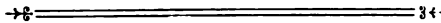
It is a strange force, indeed, which can make a number of men rush headlong into certain danger, with light hearts and bright faces. Is it because they want to save their mothers and sweethearts from the pangs of parting that they behave with such apparent indifference? And one wonders whether it is the same force at the back of the Coloured Afrikaner which distinguishes him in the firing line and makes him so oblivious of danger and careless of life?

That morning, as the train slowly glided out of the station on its long and tedious journey, at the end of which to deposit its human freight in the heart of Central Africa, there no longer to partake of humanity, but to become mere machines, mere numbers, there were many sighs stifled ere their sounds passed the lips of those near and dear ones left behind, some of whom were soon to mourn the loss of a husband, brother, child or lover.

And the men? They were cheering lustily, and, as the van left the platform those behind could just distinguish the strains of the "Cape Corps Khaki," from the dirge of "Just Before the Battle, Mother." The first lot of men of that long procession of drafts that was still to follow had gone.



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(Photo by E. A. Payne).



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(Photo by E. A. Payne).

The train reached Wellington at about 9.30, where we stopped some time, which gave the writer an opportunity of saying a last few words to his father, whom he was destined never to see again.

Like most train journeys this was tedious and monotonous beyond description; add only the noise and confusion which reigned and you realise something of what it was like. So tedious was the journey that some of us played cards to wile away the time.

Late the next evening we reached Kimberley, where the news of our coming had already been flashed. The platform was teeming with life. It seemed as if the whole Coloured community of Kimberley and Beaconsfield had come there to bid us God-speed. At one end of the platform were tables groaning under their weight of refreshments and delicacies. Ladies were hurrying up and down serving tea, cake, coffee, fruit and cigarettes. Some of us quickly rid ourselves of our immediate soldier companions, and sought amongst the crowd for those faces which we knew, and soon came upon a goodly number of them. Seldom had we had a better time, and each of us took away pleasant memories of that night and fed our imaginations on them when we were beset with difficulties and dangers at a later period. When at last the order came to board the train it was with reluctance that we complied. Amid a thunder of cheering and shouting the train moved out with slow dignity. Hands clasped hands and lips were pressed on lips in a last tender farewell, and a pang of regret must have passed through the being of each of us as we left the warm light of the station and the kind, sympathetic, and yet, withal, cheerful faces of the kind people of that place. God bless the ladies of Kimberley!

The rest of the journey to Beira was very close, and its monotony was broken only at Salisbury and Bulawayo, where kind ladies served us with refreshments and cigarettes.

At one of these stations we had orders not to leave the platform, as the train might move out at any moment. Two enterprising young Corporals determined to risk it, and, when they returned, there was no trace of the train, which, they were cheerily informed, had just moved out. Hiring a taxi they chased along the road in the hope of running her to earth. But all to no purpose. She had already outdistanced them, and they had perforce to turn back. Three weeks later two Corporals arrived at our camp at Limbe, where they related their experiences to an eager and expectant crowd, receiving expressions of sympathy from the men, and forfeiting, at the same time, a month's pay in fines to the powers that were.

Leaving the borders of Rhodesia the train glided through a country monotonous and uninteresting on its way to Beira, which place we reached early one morning. The first indication we had of nearing it was the appearance of date-palms and banana plantations, at first in isolated groups and later more thickly. After a time villages, whose inhabitants were attired in Eastern fashion, came on the scene.

Reaching Beira the Portuguese authorities would not allow us to land, and the train was shunted into the Dockyard, where, with much hustle and bustle, we were embarked on a small ship, which seemed to us almost too light to carry us across the bight to Chindi.

Before the boat started most of us had developed sick headaches as a result of the noise of embarking, and we had hardly commenced to sail when we

became violently ill, for there were but few sailors amongst us. That night the frail craft rolled and pitched on a "dirty" sea, one moment mounting on the crest of a mountain wave and the next descending into the lowest depths. We were thankful to land the next evening at Chindi, where we were put on board open barges, partly roofed over, and taken up the Zambesi to Chindeo, on a four days' journey. On our way up the river we stopped at Maroomen, where we inspected with great interest the sugar factory. The only other place of interest was Chupanga, where rest the remains of Mrs. Livingstone.

CHAPTER V.

EN ROUTE FOR LIMBE.

Darkness had already fallen, and the water of the Zambesi was black in appearance. The men were impatient to know when they were going to land. At last the feeble lights of a village hove in sight just as the moon peeped over the horizon. Its silvery rays lit up the mighty current of the river, and transformed the scenery into a veritable fairyland. Within half an hour we got alongside the bank. The lights we saw earlier in the evening were those of Chindeo. On shore were a number of iron sheds, and huge piles of firewood lay by their side. Here were a number of motor lorries in different stages of dilapidation, some with broken axles, others with buckled wheels, all bearing evidence to the terrible nature of the work people had been engaged in for the past two years, and which we were just about to enter upon. There, to complete the picture, lay a dump of discarded tyres of every make and description, and the first thing which struck one about them was that they had hardly been worn, and one realised, in part, a little of the waste entailed in war.

A board was set from the boat to the shore. Some of us had already put on our equipment and slung our rifles over our shoulders, ready to disembark. Others were in different stages of preparation, but it was decided that all men were to remain on board for the night. The food and camp equipment, however, were to be offloaded. A number of natives

were lined up, and the boxes of biscuits and beef were passed on from man to man and stored on shore. Within a very short time we were ready to settle down to an impromptu concert. The stage was the fore deck of the boat, while all the men assembled on the roofs of the barges fixed along the sides of the boats. All went off well, and everybody retired for the night.

We boarded the train early next morning for Limbe, our immediate destination. The fairy picture of the night before had gone, and now, in the light of day, Chindeo looked common-place enough. The sheds serving as a station looked ugly, and the full significance of the piles of firewood came to us when we noticed a number of porters carrying armsful of billets to the engine, to be loaded into the "coal truck." The trains, like the river boats, do not make use of coal, and all along the track there is an endless trail of wood, just as along the banks of the Zambesi and Shire rivers one finds the same sort of thing. The results of this primitive mode of firing are not so inconvenient on the train as on the more exposed barges, for cinders continually find their way through the funnel and scatter themselves about to the great discomfort and annoyance of the unfortunate passenger travelling on the open barges. On occasions like these there is a general stampede to get under cover. Helmets, shirts and other articles of clothing are damaged, and often burns of a serious nature inflicted upon the men themselves.

What struck us most forcibly was that all the railway officials were Coloured. The guard was an Indian in a uniform of immaculate whiteness, the driver and the stoker were both Indians, while the porters were Natives. It was a revelation to us all, for we had just left a country where responsible

positions on the railway were held by white people, and where the meaner kinds of work were entrusted to "poor whites," and within the breast of each must have come that feeling, which has for its source the realisation of injustice, and a keen desire to better conditions when we should return to South Africa.

The "coaches" were little better than cattle trucks. They had no compartments, and a row of seats ran along both sides the whole length, while a double row ran along the middle parallel with the others. We were crowded in one upon the other, and had scarcely room enough for ourselves, let alone for kit and equipment. The journey would have been most uncomfortable, cooped up as we were, if it had not been for the diversion offered by the tropical scenery, with its rich vegetation and its quaintly-attired people. The men employed themselves buying bananas, plantains and sugar cane, whenever a stop was made. To watch the bartering offered interesting amusement to the spectator. The men, who made every use of their rather scanty vocabulary of Swahili, failed utterly to make these sons of the soil understand their wants, and (I blush to mention it) when at last exasperated and at the end of their lingual resources (not till then, mark, indulgent reader) did they arrogate to themselves the double qualities of buyer and seller, and generally sent these enterprising commercials expostulating to another crowd, there, perhaps, to meet with a similar fate. In this way, then, did we traverse that journey. The train, not being of the most modern type, crawled on like a huge snail, taking its time.

We had all lost our patience, and came to the conclusion that we were at last in the land of the lotus eaters, and that no amount of impatience could hasten the slow movement of the huge snail which

carried us into the heart of Africa. The heat was unbearable, but did not seem to trouble the dusky people who loitered near the line in that tired, sleepy fashion common to Africans. There were old men with white, crinkled beards, and old women with wrinkled skin, dry like parchment, limping along with the aid of a stick. There were young women whose breasts were exposed to the heat of the sun, and upon whose backs, secured in a shawl, hung babies of a few days old, bare headed, and not seeming to mind the terrible piercing rays of the sun, which beat down mercilessly.

It was with mixed feelings of relief and regret when word came to get ready, and the train, slowing down, stopped by the wayside just as the sun sank behind the distant hills.

Then came a repetition of the hustle and bustle of which we had had a goodly experience since leaving the dear old South. Officers promenaded up and down the line supervising, and non-coms. shouted themselves hoarse. Here was a party offloading and handing the boxes of "bully" to others carrying these to the site of the camp. There was another preparing hot water for the tired, thirsty men.

None realised that we were to remain at Limbe for a period of time which would prove irksome in the extreme. This was the place chosen to enforce a little more discipline into the Regiment, a process which had till then been impossible. Away from the allurements of city life, and from the distractions of former haunts, the Regiment was to develop into an organisation of which any community might be proud, and about which any martial country might feel satisfied. An evil report had preceded us, and our advent was regarded with great misgiving both by the ignorant Native population and by the worthy

citizens of Blantyre, who maintained their women would no longer be safe. However, little regard was paid by the authorities to these ill-founded fears, and we have the testimony of the Native chiefs, and the European residents, that during the stay of the Battalion, both here and at Mudi, their behaviour was irreproachable, and their conduct exemplary, in spite of one or two solitary cases of misconduct perpetrated by the few irresponsibles, who ought not to have been allowed to enlist in the Regiment in the first instance.

The next day we set about making better accommodation for the officers by the construction of huts. This occupation, at first very interesting, began to pall very much after a few weeks. The huts were made on the Native pattern and by Native methods. In short, a rather substantial structure was raised from material provided by Nature hard by: grass of an unusually stout texture, so stout that the uninitiated would take it for bamboo; timber, lithe and straight, from the adjoining bush; and "tambo," manufactured on the spot from the bark of a certain tree, serving in place of excellent rope. We were, at first, lost before we grasped the method, but were able afterwards to improve upon it when applying the science of skilled artizanship.

Occupied thus, we had little leisure, and less diversion, except for an occasional concert, in which all ranks participated, and found keen enjoyment; or some exciting event, such as a bush fire, when neighbouring villages and the camp itself would be in danger of destruction. On such occasions the men would be fallen in, with green branches and shovels, and despatched to the scene of action "at the double," invariably succeeding in extinguishing the flames before much damage had been done. The

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most exciting experience we had in that way was when the petrol and tar shed of the Government supplies at Limbe caught fire, and the conflagration bade fair to spread, threatening the total destruction of the stores. But more of this in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

FIGHTING FLAMES.

It happened one evening not long after our arrival at Limbe. The day's work was ended, and twilight shrouded everything. I left the Orderly-Room—an ordinary grass hut—and walked over to my bivouac. There were a few fellows waiting for me to play cards. Splendid chaps they were, with the instincts of real sportsmen in them. They had been drilling hard the whole of the forenoon and had done a fifteen-mile route march that afternoon, but in order to give me a little relaxation they had not considered themselves. "Well, what shall it be? Whist?" I enquired, and added, "Not Klaverjas, I hope." I could never stick that game. To the best of my belief its origin is a mystery, but it always was a great favourite with the men. Even at that moment I could see the shadow of ardent "Klaverjas" players outlined against the canvas of the tents. One chap was pulling his ear, and another was gesticulating after the fashion of a madman. But it was all in the game, and those who knew all the mystic signs and "understood" each other, were invariably the ones who won.

"Yes," answered "Vic," and the other two agreed. So we sat down on the floor, the lowness of the tent not allowing us to sit on boxes. An empty biscuit box did service as a table. All went on well; my partner and I already had a "leg" to our score. Outside, groups of men were singing their favourite songs, amongst which one could even hear "Abdol,

Abdol, Abdol" of "Roker" notoriety. Suddenly the whole camp became astir, and the alarm sounded the "Fall In," at the double. Shortly before our arrival in Nyasaland a Native rising had taken place, and the malcontents had tried to storm the magazine at Blantyre, and had committed other outrages in the outlying districts. We naturally thought that something of the same nature had again happened. We were quickly disillusioned, however. Jumping up, and making for the door of the tent, we noticed an ominous glow in the sky towards Blantyre, with occasional voluminous puffs of dark smoke upward. By this time it was quite dark, and the tremendous sheet of flame before us lit up the whole countryside. Things looked serious indeed. We thought that the bush had caught fire, and, if that were the case, it would be a menace to the town. The men had already fallen in, and, in less than a minute, they were doubling to the scene of the conflagration. "Vic" and I, being on the Staff, were not attached to any company, so we "took things easy." Our other two companions were non-coms. in charge of platoons, and hurried off after their men. The fire was about a quarter of a mile from the camp, and to reach it meant hard work, for we cut across country, not wishing to take the more circuitous route. If we had it might have saved us a deal of trouble, for we had hardly started out when "Vic" came a "cropper." The night was dark and the paths strange to us. It appeared that his foot had caught in some tangled undergrowth, and his head came rather severely in contact with the stump of a tree. He was game, however, so on we went again. We had lost sight of the fire while we were rounding a small hill, when suddenly it burst into view again.

"It's the supplies that's burning!" exclaimed "Vic," and I had visions of days without food, and that would be a calamity. But the thought spurred us on all the more. We reached a level stretch and could see men running about. At last we arrived on the scene. We learned that it was the tar sheds which had caught fire, and we both heaved a sigh of relief. The supplies then were safe! Every now and then an explosion rent the air, and a "drum" would fall to earth seemingly from nowhere.

Here were all the Askaris, from the neighbouring camps, surrounding the fire. There were the Cape Corps rushing forward into the flames in skirmishing order, beating wildly about them with the green branches, and retiring each time an explosion rent the air. There were some huts in the intervening space between the tar and petrol sheds. The flames had already ravaged the former. I saw that, if the flames could be prevented from spreading, the petrol sheds might be saved. So "Vic" and I explained the situation to the others immediately around us, and in no time we started to demolish the huts. It was hot work, and when we could stick it no longer, we retired, took a breath of air, and returned once more to the fray. "Vic" was most energetic, and had clambered upon the roof of one of these grass huts, when suddenly the roof gave way with the efforts of those below, and he was buried under the straw. He quickly found his way out again. After a few hours of hard work the flames were gradually overcome and finally completely put out, and we all returned to camp well satisfied with a battle won.

CHAPTER VII.

AN IMPRESSIVE CEREMONY.

By this time our stay in Limbe had become indefinite, and we resigned ourselves to an inglorious fate, that of returning to the Union before the end of the year; and, though the prospect of going "down South" was indeed a pleasant one to contemplate, we were all agreed that it would be a blot on the name of the Battalion should we be returned without having fired a single shot at the enemy.

The daily routine became a weary drudge, even with occasional recreation like football and cricket, so much so that we made one last desperate attempt to devise additional amusements. One company, more enterprising than the rest, decided to have a sports meeting on the very next Sunday. It proved to be a red-letter day, and one to which many will look back with pleasant memories. Refreshments were provided in abundance, and the spirit of competition on the part of athletes was keen. Each realised that his own abilities might be outclassed by some superior competitor, for, after all, the Battalion represented pretty fully the sporting circles of Coloured South Africa. There were no trophies, but awards of small sums of money were given to the winners of each event.

Lest our doings on the Sabbath should be criticised as impious, it will be well to mention that not a single Sunday went by but there was a grand parade of all units for divine service. It was only after church parade that the much-needed

recreations were indulged in. One recalls with a thrill of pride one of these parades. It was the occasion of the dedication of the flag, which was a gift from the European ladies of Bloemfontein, and was presented at Kimberley on the second draft passing through. The whole Regiment was formed up *en masse* on three sides of a square, while on the other side a row of biscuit boxes served as seats for the few visitors and the officers. In front of the visitors' seats an improvised pulpit was erected, from which the Bishop of Nyasaland gave his address. After the sermon the dedication took place. Held in the wilds of Central Africa nothing more impressive than this service could have been witnessed. The details of the ceremony, and the solemnity with which they were carried out, could not have been enhanced more if it had been held in the Cathedral at Cape Town. At a sign from the Bishop the standard-bearer rose, moved up to the pulpit, and knelt down before it. The huge folds of silk hung lazily in the air, and on closer examination the motto, "Pro Imperio," embroidered in the centre, could be easily distinguished. Prayers over, and the Benediction said, the standard-bearer rose, and, with a smart right-about-turn, faced the parade. This was the sign for the culminating ceremonial of the day.

Witnessed but by few people (the majority of whom were ignorant Natives) the whole dignity of this ceremony seemed to be wasted "on the desert air" of that parade ground, far from the "madd'ning crowd" of a large centre of civilisation. With a singleness of movement the parade came to the "present," and the fife band burst out with that immortal tune, "The King," amid the low rumbling of the kettle-drums. Not a move was to be observed

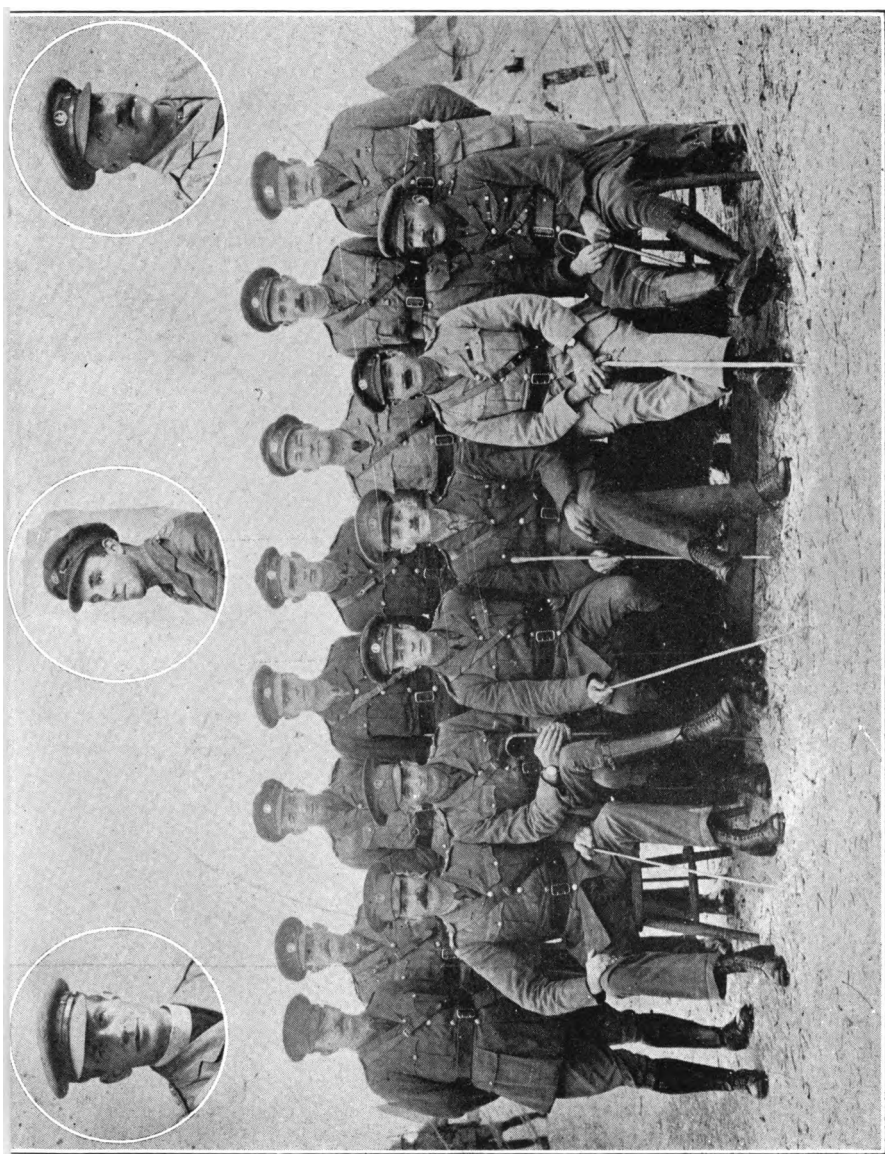
until the sheen of bayonets, flashing like a chain of lightning as the men came to the "order" again, proclaimed the end.

With the standard leading, company by company passed off the parade ground at a smart, swinging stride, and were dismissed in the lines, there to give vent to pent-up admiration, and to indulge in chit-chat. On the Regiment proceeding to the front the flag was deposited in the Zomba Cathedral for safe keeping.

CHAPTER VIII.

RUMOURS.

Rumour had it that the G.O.C., who was on his way back to Nyasaland for the benefit of his health, would visit our camp. However, it was not persistent in this instance, so nobody gave much thought to it. This curious herald of events, without any apparent source and ever-growing by the abuse of imagination, did really become very persistent at times, and it was often hard to discriminate between "official" and "unofficial" news. Thus it was very misleading. What was a possibility one moment became a probability, followed by an actuality, the next. That which was advanced as a plausible theory at first developed into a practical reality soon after. The fate of the Regiment became an open question. There was mystery in the air. It was evident that a change was about to take place. After parades large numbers hovered about the orderly-room in the hope of gleaning fresh information. Smaller groups might be seen dotted all over in animated discussion. Some openly avowed that we were returning, while others asserted that the constant and frequent practice in night training and field operations was remarkably significant, and that it could only point to one conclusion, that of proceeding to the front at an early date; and, as practical proof, they quoted the undeniable fact that the "stores were being packed up." Thereupon the latter theory, built upon such convincing proof, was eagerly accepted by the most sceptical, who had suppressed their opinions while sitting on the fence until more sure of their ground.



*Back Row (left to right) : Lt. Phillips, Lt. Mardon (killed), Lt. Rennert, Lt. Streeten, Lt. Lee, Capt. Wright, Lt. Anderson, Lt. Rainier.
 Front Row (left to right) : Lt. Wheelwright, Capt. Scott, Major Malcolm, Major Robertson, Capt. Walker, Lt. Mackenzie (died),
 Inset (left to right) : Chaplain Capt. Davies, Lt. Bryant, Lt. Menmuir.*
(Photo by E. A. Pagnic).

Better-informed circles only looked on and shook their heads. It was generally accepted by the last that we should remain in Nyasaland within easy transportation of Mlange Plateau, which was likely to be threatened should the enemy break across the Ruwuma, and penetrate into Portuguese East Africa.

At last the change came! It had to come! Nothing more natural could have happened! The rainy season was near, and the troops had to retire into winter quarters. So this, then, was the reason for the change! Disappointment was frankly shown on every face. There is no need to make public all the details of the miserable squabble which took place in officialdom, when Colonel Clayton determined to remove the camp to Mudi. Mudi was situated between Limbe and Blantyre, and was the best site for a winter camp. It was hoped that the permanent removal of the Cape Corps from the vicinity of that place might become possible. Therefore all manner of objections came to the fore. Biassed persons, falsely impressed by a medical man, maliciously spread the rumour, that the camp about to be abandoned was in such an insanitary condition that to remove the Cape Corps closer to Blantyre would be a menace to the public health. It was even rumoured that a protest meeting was to be held. Whether this was done we had no certain knowledge. It transpired that official medical opinion was more than satisfied with the condition of the camp, that that zealous gentleman who had taken upon himself to level such unjust criticism had never even visited the camp, and that he came in for a good share of the Colonel's characteristic sarcasm in his defence of the honour of the regiment from this slander.

Inter alia, it might be mentioned that the Blantyre people were disposed to be hostile to us, and, while they tolerated us in the town, treated us on a par with the Natives, who, by the way, are literally taught to worship them. It is the custom for these Natives to remove their hats when in the vicinity of any of these august personages. A member of the Corps was once very rudely accosted to the following effect: "Don't you know that you must remove your hat when passing a white lady?" The soldier, however, took no notice of the insult and passed on. Indignities, which we were subjected to from time to time in Blantyre, might be multiplied, but let it suffice to add that the less self-asserting of the men were not served in the European stores, but were told to "go round to the Native department."

In spite of prejudice and opposition we all migrated to the site of the new camp, and were once more hard at work getting ready accommodation for officers and men and shelter for the stores.

Apparently the place was a disused graveyard, for during building operations quite a number of skeletons were exhumed and burned, owing to the unwholesome odour which permeated the air. One man underwent the unpleasant experience of having one dug up on the very spot where he slept. This evil was soon remedied, and we were just about to return to the even tenour of our lives when once again rumours were wafted in from all points of the compass, of long deferred meetings of kith and kin, of Christmas dinners at home, and of a multitude of other sweet things. Whatever credence could be reposed in these rumours one thing was certain, that the proposed visit (it had ceased to be a mere rumour) of General Northey would decide our fate one way or another. According to the news from

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the front the total surrender of the German forces was a matter of a very short time. It was, therefore, logically argued that there was no alternative but that of returning home. One enthusiastic young lover, who had unreasonably fixed upon Christmas for a sacred meeting with his fiancée, saw no earthly reason why that appointment should not be kept. Alas! he was doomed to disappointment.

CHAPTER IX.

A DISAPPOINTED HOPE.

Meanwhile the construction of huts was proceeded with and finished, and the men underwent strenuous courses of parade work, field operations, night training, route marches and musketry, in accordance with expressed orders from the General Officer Commanding.

These new occupations were so mapped out that the men again had very little leisure in which to brood over grievances imaginary and real, or to yield to the allurements of Kaffir beer or Kaffir belles. Of course, grumblings and groushings there were, but these are the special privileges of the Tommy.

Parade work consisted of ordinary and ceremonial drills, the principle underlying which is so essential a factor to discipline, law and order. Field operations were given on an average of twice a week. The Regiment would fall in at daybreak with full pack and attack a certain position which had been previously taken up by one of the companies. The site of the attack was generally so distant that it necessitated a route march as a preliminary. At other times night training was combined with field operations.

Once we moved out at 9 p.m. towards a farm ten or twelve miles out, supposed to be occupied by the enemy, and which we had to attack at daybreak. After a march of four hours, following a circuitous route, we bivouacked for the night. Rising at 4 a.m. we reached our objective about two hours later.

The "attack" was planned on a large scale. The farm lay in a hollow, and was well protected by thick bush, when suddenly it loomed into view. Then began the most interesting part of the manoeuvres. Short rushes became the order, and, finally, the farm was "taken" in grand style. A rest was then indulged in and a hearty breakfast partaken of. We all split up into small parties intent on exploring. The place was covered with fruit trees of all sorts, and it may be imagined how we welcomed the opportunity of obtaining such rare luxuries as fruit. It seemed to be almost the end of the fruit season, however, for we only managed to get a few small peaches.

The late owner of the farm must have been a fancier of poultry and animals in general, for a large section of the outhouses was adapted to house these creatures. There were parrots of all colours, too, which kept up their screechings the whole time and bristled their feathers indignantly at our intrusion. A few apes gave us a display of acrobatic tricks and afforded us much amusement. The sound of the bugle ended our pleasant stay all too soon, and we fell in according to companies. We reached camp tired, but good-humoured. For all the exhaustion and stiffness that was in store for some of us, we might have gone for a picnic to Groote Schuur or the Pretoria Zoo, so thoroughly had we enjoyed ourselves with the animals at the farm.

Some of the men were so impressed with the thoroughness with which these operations were carried out in their minutest detail that a month later their friends in South Africa read with pride of the glorious victory of X——, where the enemy sustained a great disaster and left many dead and wounded on the field!

If we were fully occupied we also had relaxations, which were appreciated in the highest degree. Amongst these last may be mentioned at the risk of repetition, the many camp-fire concerts, on which occasions all ranks would gather round a huge fire kept going by a voluntary fatigue party, and the varied talent of the Regiment would be lustily applauded or otherwise by an audience, who, though it forgave the lack of scenic effect and efficient instrumental accompaniment, never failed to show, by its appreciation or aversion, its good taste or keenly critical nature. The result of this was plainly beneficial to everybody concerned; for whereas the services of all would-be artistes had of necessity to be enlisted at the first few concerts in order to avoid giving offence to sensitive natures, we wound up in the end with very clever talent.. But everybody took everything in good part. Of these other events which came as a relief from the monotony of daily toil more in the next chapter.

Here the writer would crave the indulgence of the reader to the following digression, which may appear irrelevant to the narrative, but which is really an essential detail in exposing an unwholesome policy pursued by our local military authorities. It must, therefore, be made known, that the inclusion of the European non-commissioned personnel with the first draft was cancelled at the very last moment.

We had begun to flatter ourselves that that was the signal for the filling of the non-commissioned ranks by men of the Cape Corps; that now our opportunity had indeed arrived; and that the authorities were going to put us to the test of responsibility according to their promises at Woltemade. Great was our disappointment, when,

arriving at Limbe, we found a number of privates and one or two N.C.O.'s of the 5th South African Infantry and the 2nd South African Rifles sent down by General Northey *to train the Cape Corps!*

After the first few days of their supervision the men began to feel the antipathy (or, shall I soften it by saying lack of sympathy?) of these "Staff-Sergeants" towards themselves. Our N.C.O.'s, too, began to feel the stigma cast upon them. They held a meeting of protest, and passed a resolution, which two others and the writer were instructed to hand to the Officer Commanding the detachment. It embodied the keen disappointment felt by the rank-and-file at the unjustifiable manner in which "our rights were being exploited and our privileges curtailed"; it deplored the fact that men should have been placed in responsible positions, who, traditionally, could have no sympathy for Coloured men, and who possessed little or no military knowledge, though they might have had active service experience. It further reasoned that, if the Coloured N.C.O.'s were instructed to assist these men, their capabilities (Coloured N.C.O.'s), at any rate in parade ceremonial, if not in field training, must have been recognized, and that, if this was so, had been most unjustly overlooked. They respectfully begged that, if they were thought not sufficiently trained to take over sole responsibility, these "instructors" might be removed and replaced by men at least competent to carry out the ordinary duties which fall to the lot of an N.C.O. In this modest and respectful way did they seek to redress a grievance, which for many months was destined to be a canker.

Colonel M'C—— (then Senior Major and Second in Command), the O.C. the detachment, replied

that, as a soldier, his first duty was to obey and carry out orders; that the G.O.C. had sent these men down; and that they were to remain indefinitely. We all felt that the answer was most unsatisfactory, not to say vague, but we realised that, if we had not gained actual redress, we had at least stated our case to a man whom we considered broad-minded and sympathetic. After this incident things went on very much as before.

CHAPTER X.

A GENERAL INSPECTION.

Since so much depended upon the visit of the G.O.C., we awaited his coming with mixed feelings of hope and misgiving. Every preparation was made for the following day, which was the one fixed upon for the visit. The extensive parade grounds were swept as they had never been before, and the whole camp was set in order.

Next day the Battalion was drawn up on parade at the time it was anticipated the General should put in an appearance. The whole of the previous afternoon had been taken up in preparation. The Quartermasters had been kept busy issuing soap, and the meagre stream of not too pure water at the back of the camp was much in demand. An hour passed, and, as the General had not arrived, the troops were allowed to squat down in their places. Another hour went by, and still he had not come. Faces were anxiously strained towards the direction whence he was expected, and where a signaller had been posted to signal his approach. At last a despatch rider came along with the news that the General could not inspect the troops until the next day—Sunday—as he had been detained at the K.A.R. camp a few miles back. When we were told this news disappointment could be read on every face. Extra exertions had been put into every detail of our work. Each man had polished his buttons to a brightness which dazzled the eye when reflecting the rays of the sun, and each man had taken special trouble about the washing of his clothes, and now

the General had not come. In spite of this bitter disappointment the men sprang to attention as one man and dismissed.

That afternoon, as I was hovering within call of the Orderly-Room, I recognised in the distance two familiar figures. One was Colonel B——, of the K.A.R., who was destined to be wounded at the fighting round Mahua, and the other proved to be no less a person than General Northey himself, with his accustomed monocle fixed in his eye, and dressed in the uniform of an ordinary officer. Thinking that the Corporal of the Guard at the entrance to the camp might experience a difficulty in recognising the General, I looked about for an orderly to carry a message to him. A little distance away I discovered the orderly bugler dozing in the shade. "Bugler!" At the sound of my voice he started up and doubled up to me. "Sound the defaulters, Sergeant?" he enquired. I was excited and quite off my head. "No, d——n the defaulters. Double up to the Corporal of the Guard and tell him to turn out his men and give the present. The General has arrived." The bugler, now on the alert, rushed off. Meanwhile I doubled to the Adjutant, and out of breath told him what was passing. He, a usually level-headed man, also got flurried, and, in his turn, ran off to convey the news to the Colonel.

A long interview then took place between the General and Colonel C——, in which many momentous questions were discussed. The Orderly-Room Staff were kept pretty busy hunting for old correspondence in the files referring to questions of camp equipment.

Whatever transpired at this meeting, it is certain the General was favourably impressed.

The day after the Battalion was duly massed on parade. At a given signal the bugler sounded the "General Salute," and the General alighted from the motor, which had conveyed him there. Approaching the parade the "Present!" was given, and he made his tour of inspection to the strains of the drum-and-fife band. He was highly satisfied with everything, and, after the inspection, field manoeuvres became the order of the day. It was a piping-hot day, and the closeness of the atmosphere anything but favourable to field operations, but the men put their whole soul into their task. Such keenness stimulated the efforts of each to create a good impression, that the minutest detail (not unobserved from the spot which marked the presence of the General) was carried out with the thoroughness of seasoned soldiers. The General expressed his satisfaction at the manner in which these operations was done, and the quickness and alertness shown by the men.

On the Monday afternoon he addressed the European N.C.O.'s of the Cape Corps and K.A.R.'s at the camp of the latter. What transpired there was never clearly revealed, but it was obvious that again the Coloured N.C.O.'s had been overlooked.

CHAPTER XI.

TAKING THE FIELD.

After the inspection everybody lived in daily expectation of definite moving orders, the possibility of which had been hinted at by the General at the time of his visit. Mobility tests were given from time to time, not without amusing results, as these ardent sons of war, not believing these to be tests, but the real thing, gave up the idea of ever moving forward.

Then one afternoon a telegram was taken to the Colonel's "kiaha." The message it contained was the order to move immediately and occupy Mtengula. When the news became generally known all sought for the position of our destination on the map, and, having satisfied ourselves that it was situated about half way up the east coast of Lake Nyasa, speculated upon what the unknown future held for each.

Whatever were the circumstances which led to this regiment taking the field at that apparent late season, it is certain that the good impression of efficiency and general tone conveyed to the General was a great influencing factor in that respect. If the Regiment was well thought of after the first month of its training at Cape Town, it was everything that a perfect organisation ought to be after additional months of strenuous training in Nyasaland. It had reached a standard of efficiency in all branches of military training. Again, although we were supposed to have remained in the vicinity of Mlange against a threatened enemy invasion of

Nyasaland, this programme might possibly have been changed, and the new one determined upon, in the hope that the thorough training of the Regiment might act as a strong determining influence upon a campaign in a foreign colony—a feature which made it undesirable to prolong its duration unnecessarily.

During a previous invasion of Portuguese territory, British troops were invited to drive back the enemy across the Ruwuma. The troops were not immediately withdrawn after that had been done, a fact which was strongly resented by the Portuguese authorities, and representations were made to the respective Governors of Nyasaland and British East Africa with the result that the troops were recalled. Taking into consideration this incident, it is difficult to understand just why British troops were again requisitioned by a foreign Power, which had taken up so ungrateful an attitude on a former occasion. It is, however, quite obvious why the British pursued Von Lettow into Portuguese territory.

The capture of Tafel, though still uneffected, was an imminent event, and with his capture would have ended the German East Africa campaign. But Von Lettow, who had fled across the Ruwuma, and might at any time return reinforced and better equipped, had still to be reckoned with, and to have waited for his return would have entailed a serious loss of time, as had been proved over and over again. Hence the acceptance of the Portuguese invitation. And the desire to terminate a campaign in a foreign country, which had been so adverse before, was amply justified, in spite of the exception taken by the Portuguese to the presence of British troops in their colony on the former occasion.

To understand exactly how events fitted in, it is necessary to summarise the happenings prior to this Regiment taking the field. It was considered very strange that the enemy (as subsequently proved) were able to retire so quickly and subsist in a country to all appearances devoid of food. But when it is remembered that the present invasion was the third of its kind, realisation takes the place of wonder. Of course, the last one differed from the previous two in that on both the former occasions the enemy deliberately crossed the border for the purpose of collecting food, while on the last occasion he was driven across by force of circumstances.

The first time Von Lettow and Scholtch crossed over the border with 1,500 Tenga Tenga on a food-collecting expedition. They penetrated as far as Mtareka, and skilfully retired, avoiding the 5th S.A.I., stationed at New Mwembe, and the 2nd S.A.R. at Old Mwembe. The raiders had plundered the Portuguese in a wholesale manner, and the victims had offered but a weak resistance. The second time the enemy crossed the Ruwuma they went through practically the same programme of pillage and plunder. Again the Portuguese offered no resistance, but fled from their bomas.

There is something strange, if indeed not suspicious, about the way in which the Portuguese allowed themselves to be robbed. Whether their Askaris were not enthusiastic enough to protect the country of their masters against the inroads of a hostile nation, or whether the Portuguese were hunting with the hounds, and, at the same time, running with the hare, is an undecided question. But over and over again they have retreated from their strongholds without an attempt to resist the enemy, allowing them to plunder their bomas and to take

food, ammunition and other equipment in abundance. A German prisoner once explained, on being asked to solve the riddle: "We wait until the bomas are well supplied with everything, then we calmly march in, take all we want, march out again, and allow the Portuguese, who had evacuated at our coming, to take possession once more, and nothing more is said."

The advance force, under Major M——, started from Blantyre. The journey north was made in motor lorries as far as Zomba, a place which, in ordinary times, could not be more than a mere Native village, sprinkled with a few European structures, but which teemed with life since it had become the supply base. It was garrisoned by Askari regiments of the K.A.R., besides having hundreds of drivers of the M.T.C. continuously at their work of transporting food and supplies to the Bar. From Zomba troops moving north were taken in light cars along a road winding through delightful scenery, but which, in the rainy season, becomes a mere muddy trail, where in places timber must be placed across the track in order to secure the safe passage of the mechanical transport.

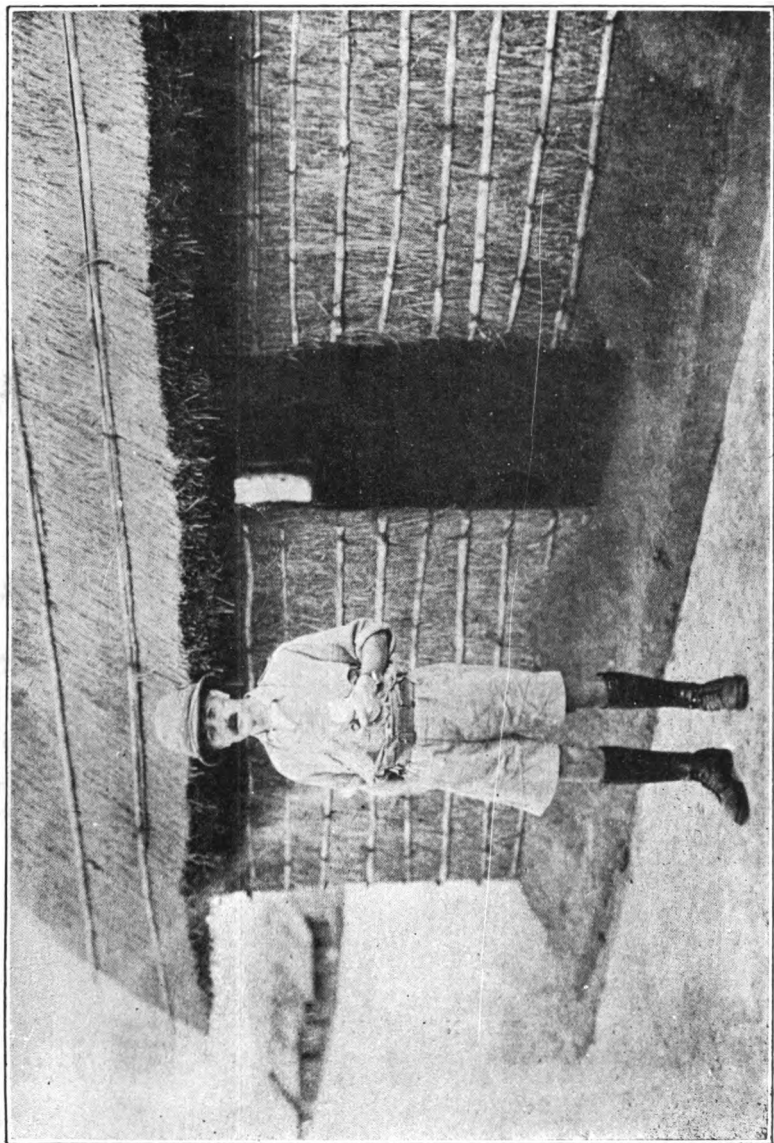
Half way to the Bar is a camp, where yet another change of cars is made, known as Fraser's Camp. Arriving at the Bar a pontoon is worked across the Shire River, which has a considerable width just there. The process of barging across is rather primitive. A strong cable is stretched across the river. The barge, one of whose sides is just under the cable, is propelled by three or four Natives, who, squatting down and facing in the opposite direction to which the barge is going, stretch forward, drawing the cable towards themselves. By this means all

troops and supplies are taken over. About a mile further on lies Fort Johnson, at the most southern extremity of Nyasa.

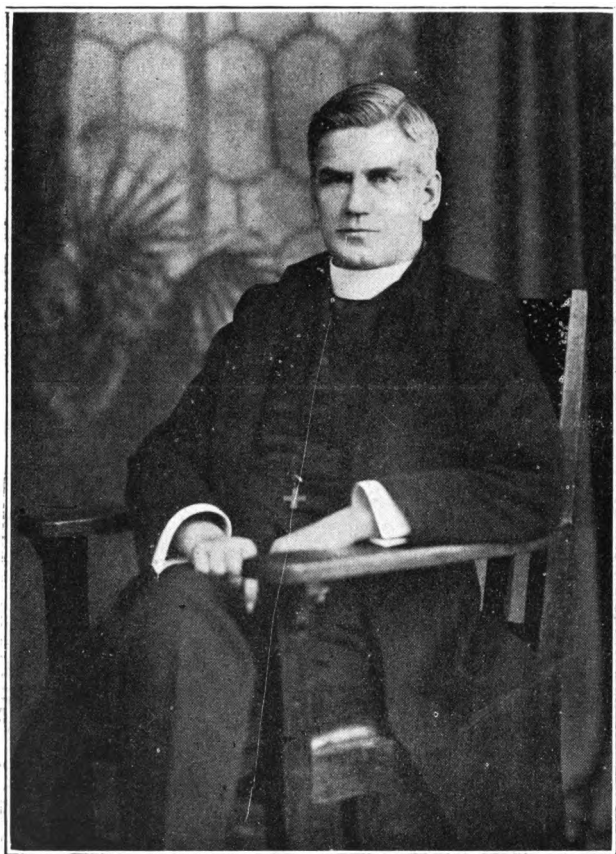
The Lake was a revelation to most of the men, who did not realise until then that an inland sheet of water could have so extensive an area. Then came the journey up the Lake, to describe which human effort is vain. Seen from the shore the blue waters of Nyasa stretch far into the dim distance where the blue of the sky mingles with it. On the trip romance crowds in from everywhere. The mysteries of the "Dark Continent" seem to take definite form, and the traveller can hear the very voice of Livingstone as he preached to the heathen and see the very slaves chained to the trees, when pointed out the island where slaves were held in bondage.

The force finally landed at Mtengula. This little bay lies on the eastern bank of Lake Nyasa. A peninsular strip of land jutting southward into the water bounds it on the West, thus securing a safe anchorage for ships. The peninsula rises almost sheer from the level of the water on the west, while on the east it gradually slopes down, leaving a narrow margin of beach, where bathing is pleasant and disembarkation safe. Looking east is a high range of mountains buttressing the hinterland, through which winds the path inland. When coming down this path the whole peninsula is exposed to a bird's eye view, and although at the time of the Regiment taking the field it consisted only of a boma and a few brick houses scattered here and there, it had grown to a "town" of considerable size after a few months, and was covered with huts.

The next afternoon, at about 2 o'clock, Major M——, with his force, numbering about two hundred (not counting Tenga Tenga), left Mtengula



MAJOR M'CLUSKIE (afterwards Lt.-Col. in Command of the Battalion).



CANON S. W. LAVIS

(Member of the Cape Corps Recruiting Committee and other bodies during the War).

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for Unango—a journey which took three and a half days, but which was subsequently made into stages covering five days.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NARROW TRAIL INLAND.

The whereabouts of Von Lettow's force was unknown, but its strength was supposed to be about 1,500 rifles, including about one hundred whites, an erroneous estimate which afterwards was the cause of a good deal of trouble. A portion of this force was believed to be moving from the Mkulu Hills towards Nwembe. While the Nigerian Brigade at Ngomane was pushing advanced troops up the Lugenda towards the Mkulu Hills, and Colonel H—— was advancing on Mwembe from the direction of Namweras, the Cape Corps was to occupy Unango, construct defensive works there and patrol in the direction of Mwembe with the purpose of obtaining information regarding the movements of the enemy, and to endeavour to get into touch with H——'s force. It was a memorable march. The middle of the rainy season, the rain poured down continuously. The "road," a mere footpath, was slippery, and to climb certain parts demanded the utmost energy of the troops. Our ankles sank in at every step.

All along the way, just discernible through the thick undergrowth of the bush, could be seen cattle kraals, a fact which reminded us that the enemy had passed along the same path but a few months before, when they raided Mtengula and carried off all the cattle. At night the detachment formed a perimeter, round which lying-in trenches were made under fierce downpours of rain. But the discomforts

of the first few nights were not to be compared with those of the following. In the morning we usually made an early start, and our already damp clothing came in for more drenching under the downpour of the day. On the way the advance guard came up with some Natives carrying bales of blankets believed to be destined for the use of the enemy. These were confiscated and distributed among the Tenga Tenga, who were sorely in need of a covering, while the rest were sent back to Mtengula. The last night we came in sight of an abandoned tobacco farm, which lay in a valley, approached by a path dropping sheer. The descent was made with great difficulty, owing to the greasy state of the path. We, who carried our packs and 150 rounds of ammunition and rifle, felt it very much, but the poor porters, who had to carry more than the regulation load very often, were perhaps worse off. As we were nearing Unango and might at any time meet with an enemy patrol the strictest precautions were taken. Instead of occupying the outhouses of the inviting farm we bivouacked for the night on a small hill overlooking the valley. Pickets were thrown out on all sides and trenches dug. All fires were put out at sundown. As the rain continued to pour during the night it may be imagined that we had an anything but comfortable rest. In the morning, before the sun was up, we proceeded once again. This time we went on with more caution. The march before us was a long one, and would tax every bit of energy left in us. Rain continued to fall all day. It was a heavy march, and at about 11 o'clock a halt was called, and we just sat or lay down where we stood. We were drenched to the skin, and our greatcoats, which absorbed a considerable amount of moisture, had grown heavy. Indeed, it was believed that some men

had converted theirs into three-quarter coats in order to reduce the weight, by the simple expedient of cutting off the bottom, while others, more reckless, had conveniently lost theirs. A cow which accompanied the detachment died on the way from sheer exhaustion. Amusing as this incident may seem, it proves, nevertheless, the strenuousness of the march.

Before we could go on again a river had to be crossed. Previously many streams and spruits had been crossed, taking us up to our waists, but this river was of greater depth, and many men sank below the surface of the water, and being weighted with one hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition, a rifle and a valise bag, got into difficulties and had to receive help. It took some hours before we finally crossed, and the last stage of the journey was made with great difficulty. Unango could be seen about four miles out. To the left, facing south, a high peak rears itself out of a valley. At the foot of this mountain, nestling among the green foliage of trees, stands the Mission, and still further on is situated the Portuguese boma set on an eminence and surrounded by a dry moat. To the right, facing the boma, we pitched camp. All round the perimeter standing trenches were dug, which took a good many days to complete. Meanwhile parties were sent in the direction of Likopolwe and Mtonya.

CHAPTER XIII.

PRELIMINARY SCRAPS.

All this time our troops at Unango were fully occupied in consolidating the position. When Unango was occupied in the first instance only lying-in trenches or "pans" had been dug. Now standing trenches were in construction, extending over a perimeter of fully a mile and encircling three knolls. The men were kept hard at digging for most part of the day, for reports had been received of many enemy parties patrolling in the vicinity.

Major M'C—— was expected to arrive with a large convoy on January 1st, and news reaching camp that a small enemy party was seen near the road leading into Unango, he was informed by special runner of the threatened attack. When the message reached him it was well after noon. He immediately threw out a small advance guard, which moved in diamond formation, the flanks of which penetrated the thick bush for a few hundred yards. The porters, who had become suspicious of these movements, showed great unrest, and it was only by having a strong rearguard to push them on that they were induced to continue the advance. Eventually the spruit at the entrance to Unango was reached, and the river swollen by the recent heavy rains, and the convoy in danger of surprise attack, a crossing was effected under great difficulties. At length the camp was reached in safety. Meanwhile there had been great excitement. At about noon, when we

were having our midday meal, the alarm was suddenly sounded, and food was abandoned untouched for the rifle, and the "stand-to-arms" was ordered. Within a few seconds every man of us was in position in the trenches. These, newly dug while the rain was falling, were anything but comfortable. Some of the men were up to their knees in mud, clay and water. A few volleys had in the first instance been poured into the camp. But after that everything was strangely silent. Four weary hours did we keep vigil, but no attack was attempted by the wily enemy. Patrols were sent in all directions, but returned that night reporting all clear. So an exciting New Year's Day came to an end.

The period between January 1st and January 9th slipped by without events of importance. Trench-making still went on, but with a reduced number of men, as many by this time were stricken with malaria and dysentery.

Reports were sent in on the 9th that the enemy were patrolling in the vicinity of the Likopolwe-Mtonya road. Accordingly a Lieutenant was despatched the next day with a small patrol to Mtonya, with instructions to intercept the small enemy parties and to prevent them from returning to Likopolwe, which was then the position occupied by the main body of the enemy. This party, after two days' marching, met an enemy patrol. A small skirmish took place, but we were only able to capture one Askari. The rest escaped into the bush. The next day they again encountered an enemy patrol, wounding and capturing an Askari sergeant-major, and wounding an Askari, who managed, however, to get away into the bush. They had now been out for three days, and their rations were giving out. Already they had had to go on quarter rations, and

were not sorry, therefore, to return to camp, and reached there on the morning of the 14th, at the same time as Lieut. L——'s men marched back into camp from patrol.

Lieut. L——'s party had had a very rough time of it. Leaving camp on the 10th they patrolled a circuitous route to Mtonya. Rain came down in torrents, and progress was necessarily slow. On the 11th they entered a village surrounded by mealie fields. Suddenly the advance guard halted, and signalled to the main body to get down. In front of them, not two hundred yards away in a clearing, a thin spiral of smoke ascended into the air, around which were squatting about twenty Askaris, apparently preparing a meal, and evidently feeling very secure, since they had not taken the precaution to place outposts round their bivouac. Our men immediately split into two parties, one cutting through the mealie patch on the left, and the other going into the bush on the right. This tactic was resorted to in order to bewilder the enemy. It was successful. At a given signal an enfilade fire was poured in amongst the Askaris, who, thinking they were surrounded, left rifles and all, and fled in every direction. One Askari of the B.F. Company and three carriers were captured. The former was making his escape along with a Corporal, when one of our men, Samuels by name, noticed their intention, and, following them up, demanded their surrender. The Askari at once threw down his rifle and held up his hands, but the Corporal, throwing up his hands, still retained his rifle. Samuels, not suspecting treachery, looked back, motioning to a comrade to come to his assistance. In turning his head the Corporal, seeing his advantage, fired and shot

Samuels through the abdomen and secured his liberty by dashing into the bush. First aid was rendered to the unfortunate man, but he died the following day, and was buried at Mtonya. This was our first casualty from gunshot in the field.

On January 11th the same party received information of the presence of two German whites and thirty Askaris in the Mtonya area, and they endeavoured to get into touch with them, having received a further supply of rations. On entering Mtonya under cover of the bush two parties of Germans were observed coming from opposite directions. Each supposing the other to be hostile, they opened fire upon one another. Our men, hidden as they were by the bush, watched the fray with great amusement. So far as could be ascertained the marksmanship was so inferior that there were no casualties on either side. After 15 minutes of scrapping they found out their mistake, and discovering our troops, who, anxious not to miss the fun, had exposed themselves to view, they joined forces and came to the attack. Our men were ready and inflicted heavy losses on them, killing, wounding and capturing some. Having gained all the information possible, and being short of food, this patrol returned to Unango.

A patrol sent out to Makate reported the presence of four enemy Ruga Ruga. This party had entered the Makate boma and found it deserted. Another patrol captured an Askari corporal near Likopolwe. He had joined the portion of the enemy dispersed by Lieut. L—— at Mtonya, and proved to be no less a person than the murderer of the unfortunate man, Samuels. He carried a despatch signed by Winkle of the 13th F.K., addressed to the Sergeant-Major in charge of a German force still believed to

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be at Unango, but which had retired at our coming,
The following is a free translation of the despatch:—

“I am lying with my patrol at Suelan Chomba.
Pleace come this way with your detachment, so
that we can surrender. The two wounded
Askaris are with me.”

Colonel C—— did not know what to make of
this message, and for the next few days excitement
was rife, as we expected the voluntary surrender of
this force. But whether Winkle changed his mind
owing to circumstances having altered in his favour,
or whether this message was a ruse to entrap us,
nothing happened, and our hopes of a great coup
were dashed to the ground.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIKOPOLWE OCCUPIED.

The information brought in by Ruga Ruga, and by our various patrols, confirmed the belief that a strong body of the enemy, if, indeed, not the main body itself, was at Likopolwe, and the fact that so many patrols were sent out by the enemy seemed to point to one thing, namely, that they intended to hold the position, and, therefore, must be well entrenched.

On Friday, January 11th, a force of two hundred and forty rifles, accompanied by one platoon of Portuguese (in nondescript dress, having been plundered by the enemy), and six machine-guns, under Major M'C——, moved out of Unango with instructions to drive out the enemy entrenched at Likopolwe. We started out at two in the afternoon. The sun beat down upon us as only it can in that tropical country. There was no cheering from those remaining behind, no speech from the O.C., but all felt the grimness of the situation. Each was conscious that he might not return again, and yet there was a cheerfulness withal in the face of each. The padre accompanied us for a mile out of camp and bade us God-speed. That night, after completing eight miles, we camped at the Lutze River. After we had dug in the rain poured down in torrents. Early next morning we crossed the river, and so strong was the current that we had to hold on to each other to prevent ourselves from being swept away. It took fully three hours before the last of the Tenga Tenga had effected a safe crossing.

with their 50lb. burdens of food. Marching was continued throughout the rest of the day (a midday halt of one and a half hours being called), while the rain fell intermittently, making the footpath so greasy that great trouble was experienced in climbing the frequent rises and descending steep inclines. That night the weather was cruel. The lightning flashed, revealing our position clearly, the thunders roared, and the rain came down in fierce downpours. The "pans" we had dug became dams of water, and when one woke during the night (that is to say if one were fortunate enough to sleep) one would be afraid to move for fear that the spot which one's body had kept dry might be flooded. Another, careless of this, would, because of his cramped position, rise, stretch himself, yawn and promenade around his trench. Then, weariness overcoming him, he would doze off while standing, and presently, as he was about to fall over, wake up, and decide that lying down even in mud was after all the better course. He would fling himself down again into the pool at his feet, and thus the dreary night would drag on till dawn came as a relief. Having breakfasted we would once more move on, feeling miserable in our wet clothes. It was Sunday, but there was no indication of the sacredness of the day. We went through the same tramp, tramp, tramp, and we thought the same thoughts as the day before. Sunday came to an end, and we went through the same experience as the night before.

On Monday morning we made an earlier start than usual. No fires were allowed, but, speaking for myself, my Native boy had managed to make me a steaming hot mug of coffee and a hearty breakfast all the same. I noticed that many others were enjoying like good things.

We trekked more warily, for we were nearing the position of the enemy. At about 10 o'clock our advance guard captured a Ruga Ruga. He looked very bewildered, and was quaking from very fear. We gained the information that the enemy was scarcely a mile off. This came as a surprise to us, since we expected to attack Likopolwe Boma from the rear. Here it must be explained that Mbamba Hill, where we bivouacked the previous night, was a matter of four hours' march to the boma. But the approach to it could be seen for fully two hours out. Did we take this route we should have warned the enemy of our intentions. Instead, therefore, we went by a circuitous route from Mbamba Hill, hoping to surprise the enemy and attack him in the rear. But now, having questioned this prisoner as to the whereabouts of the enemy, we found that they had abandoned the boma at our coming and had taken up a strong position on the very road we were now on. At about noon a halt was called. An officer and a platoon were sent out to the left of the path with instructions to take up a position there and remain in ambush with the object of cutting off the enemy when the main body should attack them.

The men, tired, footsore and weary, just lay where they were and slept, when suddenly we were awakened by the rattle of rifle fire to the left. It appeared afterwards that the platoon sent out to cut off the retreat of the enemy allowed themselves to be seen, and, being fired upon, had to return the compliment. This unforeseen incident upset the plans of Major M'C——, who, being certain of capturing the whole force, had neglected (though urged to do so by other officers) the precaution of posting a machine-gun on the right flank to check the enemy in the event of his retreating. In a short time we

of the first line opened up into skirmishing order, and our advance having been cleared by machine-gun fire, we were ordered to fix bayonets. Major F—— led the attack. The enemy made a poor attempt to withstand the rush, but fired high, and the bullets whizzed harmlessly over our heads. They retired up a kopje, which we immediately charged, but gaining the top, found it abandoned and the enemy fled. The affair proved to be a rearguard action, the main body having retired an hour or so previously. We were keenly disappointed. All we captured was one ton of beans and a small quantity of camp equipment.

A platoon of men was then ordered to scour every inch of ground for about five hundred yards into the bush to see whether the enemy had really gone. The result of their efforts confirmed our worst fears.

We then re-formed and camped within a mile of the boma in a strong position, and next morning we formally occupied the Likopolwe boma. There we left a considerable force and the rest retired to Mbamba, where we remained for a few days before going back to Unango. We were allowed to put up shelters, and these were of great value as the weather continued to be stormy.

The 17th came, and still the convoy which had been expected every day had not arrived. Already we had been put on reduced rations. Late in the evening of the 18th it arrived. The convoy had been stuck in the Lutze, and the escort had had a miserable time of it. During the raging storm they had sought shelter anywhere, and even invaded the huts of the officers, whence, discovering their mistake, they crept early in the morning and crouched around the camp-fire.

CHAPTER XV.

A RETREAT.

Immediately after the affair at Likopolwe Hill a patrol in charge of Lieut. M—— was sent out to keep in touch with the enemy, whose retreat, it was noticed, was directed towards Mwembe. He had been away for a day when a native runner arrived at the boma with a note from him, asking for relief. It appeared afterwards that he had camped against a hill the night before. There was a clear sky, and the slightest noise could be detected. A sentry saw two figures creeping up towards him. He raised his rifle, and would have pressed the trigger, but he recognised in time that they were Native women. Inquiring from them what they wanted, they told him that there were Germans in the neighbouring village, and that, if he wanted to capture them, they would lead him there. He reported the matter, and the women were closely questioned by M——. He, however, was doubtful. He scented danger, and was at first inclined to detain the women, but when they understood his intention they fell at his feet and appealed to him most earnestly to let them go, saying they were his friends. He then decided to let them go, having been promised that they would return in the morning and lead the patrol to the place where the Askaris were supposed to be in hiding. The women had scarcely gone an hour when the reports of rifle fire were suddenly heard from all sides. The Tenga Tenga, always a timid set, forsook all and fled in panic. Confusion reigned. Here was a “boy” rubbing his eyes in a dazed fashion, unaware

of the peril in which he was and having a vague idea that something was wrong; there, his waist-cloth all awry, was running another to seek for protection in the bush.

Not knowing the strength of the enemy, M—— determined to withdraw just before dawn. He had refrained from responding to the firing, not wishing to reveal his position. The enemy, uncertain, was therefore baffled in his attempted attack. Early that morning most of the Tenga Tenga returned in ones and twos, and just before the first streak of dawn lit up the East our men prepared to retire. They had noticed a fairly good position about five miles back, one which they thought they could hold against any odds until the expected relief came.

Major F—— realised the significance of the message and at once despatched two officers and thirty men with a Lewis gun. This party was scarcely a mile out of camp when it was met by another messenger from Lieutenant M——. It stated that he was holding a position, and asked for help. He estimated the force against him at a hundred and fifty Askaris. The officer in charge of the relief patrol sent back word to Major F—— that it would be safer to fall back upon Likopolwe and protect the stores at the boma at all costs. He gave no thought to the patrol, which stood in danger of being cut up, and to whose assistance he had been ordered. F—— sent back a peremptory reply that he was to proceed to the relief of M——'s party immediately. In spite of this direct order he took up another position about half a mile further out, which was hidden behind a high hill, so that his movements could not be seen from the boma. From this position he could see two distinct sets of fires, which might have been, judged from that distance, about a quarter of a mile from

each other. The nearer fire he took to be M——'s patrol, the other that locating the position of the enemy. Here he detached Sergeant I—— and six men to go out and ascertain whether his surmise was correct, while he and the rest of the relief party retired to camp.

After about two hours' careful searching, I—— saw a party coming towards him in the dusk of the gathering twilight. Not being able to discern friend or foe at that distance, and in such bad light, he ordered his men to down in a deep sluit which lay to the side of the path, and awaited developments. The silence was now only broken by the steady breathing of the men and by the uneven footfall of the oncoming party. The strain was intense, and the men prepared to sell their lives dearly. At last the party struggled into view, and was recognised as M——'s patrol. They were in a sad state. Holding the position they had waited in vain for relief. They had been obliged to abandon the position and leave part of the stores behind, as most of the carriers had fled. They were in a pitiable condition. One poor fellow limped along without boots, his feet badly blistered and cut, and protected only by puttees wrapped about them. The shirt of another was torn to tatters, while yet another man was almost naked. Lieutenant M—— himself was clothed in a non-descript suit. What he had worn at the time was wet through from the rain, and his spare clothing had been lost by his Native batman. He and his party had spent a miserable night in the rain and cold, until the morning arrived, and with it the possibility of a fire, around which all had crouched for warmth.

The patrol, reinforced, continued to retire, followed closely by the pursuing enemy, and reached



“From Zomba Troops moving North were taken in light cars”

—Page 51.



A Bugle Band of the K.A.R.



C.S.M. JOHN D. PERCIVAL (afterwards Lieutenant).

camp in safety on the morning of the 18th. The enemy ceased to follow them when a few miles from the camp.

Meanwhile a convoy had been sent from Mbamba, and was expected to arrive the next day. At about noon a small reconnoitering party of the enemy successfully evading our Eastern observation post, had dug in on the slope of the hill facing the camp. We were not aware of their presence until they poured a few volleys into our midst. We returned with machine-gun fire, and they were forced to retire over the crest of the hill, whence they made their escape. At that moment the convoy was seen coming, and fearing that the enemy might cut off his supplies, Major F—— called for twelve volunteers, who, with himself, fetched in the convoy. At the time of the attack an incident occurred. Our water-hole was a good distance out of camp, almost at the foot of the hill on which it was situated. Sergeant I——, who had gone down to fetch water, came in for a rather rough time. He had been located by the enemy and had become a "hot" target. Bullets rained around him and, crouching as low as he could, he crawled up the steep path under unpleasant circumstances. He, however, reached our line, and had just sufficient strength left to roll over the parapet into the trench, none the worse for his experience.

Our troops at Mbamba were withdrawn, and the Portuguese were instructed to garrison the place with an officer and fifty Askaris, and to build a rest camp there.

CHAPTER XVI.

ROUNDING UP THE HUN.

The period between January 22nd and February 3rd proved to be one of the most strenuous of the whole campaign. It was a series of dreary trudges all the time, at the end of which we always found the bird flown.

It was worthy of note that Von Lettow's plan was to give us a good run for our trouble; for his main body during the whole of that period was seldom stationary, and, though he was on the run, his retreat was marked by system and order. He, himself, his staff and his white personnel were carried in Machilas. Add to this advantage the fact that rearguard patrols interfered greatly with our advance and you understand why the struggle, as far as this Regiment is concerned, was unduly prolonged. Whenever these patrols bumped into one of our own their retreat invariably took a direction which was as widely divergent from the general line of retreat as are the Poles apart from each other. Hence we could form no definite idea from these movements as to even the probable direction of the retreating German force. Often our men followed these enemy patrols in the hope of being led to the main body, but always they were disappointed.

At this time our main advance party lay entrenched at Likopolwe Boma. The boma stands on a hill high enough to command a front of a mile in extent. Beyond that are ranges of hills, and still beyond these stretches of dense bush meet the eye.

Our outposts, placed on the outermost ridges, could see no further than a few hundred yards, and yet we knew that somewhere in that mass of foliage lurked the enemy.

On the 22nd of January two patrols left the boma in quest of them. Moving warily, the first came in sight of Mwembe late on the evening of the 24th. The officer in charge sent his Corporal to find out whether the enemy was still there. He was away two hours. Crouching low all the time for over a mile of rough country he had come near enough to discover that the boma was practically destroyed by fire and deserted. The next morning the patrol entered the place, and received from the Natives, who had fled during the German occupation, but now returned, a detailed account of the happenings. They told us that the enemy took all the horses and mules belonging to the Portuguese and slaughtered them for food. Carcasses were lying strewn all over the place and the gutting of the boma was complete. In places the embers were still smouldering. Later that day the other patrol, followed by a detachment from Likopolwe, also entered Mwembe. It was a few days after, on the arrival of another detachment, that the news reached us of how one of our own men had been mistaken for a German and had been wounded. It happened like this: A convoy left Likopolwe for Mwembe. It consisted of a long train of Tenga Tenga, but was guarded by only half-a-dozen men, who were placed between the carriers at long intervals. Amongst the escort was a man who needed medical attention, which he could only get by seeing the doctor, who had already gone on to Mwembe. This man had behaved in a queer manner, and the O.C. of the detachment at Likopolwe

thought it the best course to send him with the convoy. The convoy had already gone for more than an hour when those in camp heard a volley coming from our outposts on the ridge facing east. As that was the front they did not know what to make of it. They had not long to wait when one of the men of the outposts brought in a report. It appeared that the Corporal in charge saw a man advancing on his post from the front. He had no helmet on, and was denuded of his lower garments, retaining only a khaki tunic. The state of the man, and the fact that he wore a long beard, made him an object of suspicion to the Corporal, who said he thought the man was a German. Being challenged, this apparition became threatening and brought his rifle to the present. The corporal was cool, however, and ordering his post to "down," sent a volley into the on-coming man, who dropped, wounded in both thighs. On examination he was recognised as the man who had been sent to Mwembe for medical attention. Apparently the poor man had gone off his head and had taken our outpost for that of the Germans. First aid had been rendered and he had been carried back to camp on an improvised stretcher.

Sunday, 27th, was one of the hottest days we experienced in that tropical country. A patrol left before daybreak and made for Gamlo, a village situated to the south-east of Mwembe. It lay in a little valley surrounded by crops of maize, and was visited by a party of Askaris, docile and unsuspecting as usual. A little skirmish took place, which resulted in the killing of one Askari and the capturing of six others of the 21st and 19th F.K.'s, and some rifles. The rest of the enemy scampered off into the bush, taking with them the warning of our coming to Likwesi.

Our detachment reached this place on the afternoon of the 28th, but the enemy left it without opposition. The Likwesi River is noted for its many twists and turns just at that place. Here it abounds with tropical vegetation, the coolness of its shade inviting the tired and travel-worn soldier to rest under its ample shade. A few days were spent here for the purpose of constructing about a dozen bridges over the various spruits, which wound in and out, following the most tortuous courses imaginable. This work was difficult, as the river was infested with crocodiles. The thick monkey rope which hung in large festoons between the trees was of great assistance in the making of these bridges. All this time patrols were scouring the surrounding country, and on the 30th reinforcements, under Major M——, reached us. Once again we were ready to move off.

On one occasion, just before we started again on the chase, some snipers got within rifle range of our camp and fired a few shots amongst the ranks of a convoy, which was just entering, killing a carrier. In no time boxes of biscuits and beef were dropped, and the timid carriers scattered all over the place. It was most amusing to watch these fellows making "funk holes." Their method reminded me of that which the ostrich is supposed to do, for they made a hole just big enough for the head, and there they remained until the trouble had blown over.

On February 1st our scouts reported that the main body of the enemy had crossed the Lujenda during the period between the 28th and 31st. This was unpleasant news for us, for we had hoped that, with out reinforced column, we could hold up the enemy at the "ferry" crossing of the Lujenda until Hawthorn's K.A.R.'s could come up on the opposite

bank and so force Von Lettow to "throw up the sponge." But help from that direction was a forlorn hope, for it was a well-known fact that when those regiments were on trek they were not troubled about time, and often indulged themselves in hunting expeditions, even when the need was most pressing. It was observed once that they travelled with bedroom and drawing-room suites and that their retinue of personal servants and wives exceeded the fighting strength a good many times over. Is it to be wondered at, then, that we could not wedge in Von Lettow at that juncture? But although the main body had crossed, we had to reckon with the foraging patrols which still infested the area on our side of the river.

The road between Likwesi and Mtarika was, luckily, a broad clearing through the dense bush, but even then the path was a narrow trail winding its way through the grass, which grew taller than the height of an ordinary tree. Why the enemy did not make use of this unusual circumstance to ambush us I cannot understand up to this day. One of our patrols, however, spied a foraging party at a spot about thirteen miles from Mtarika. Our men had taken up a position on a hill whose ascent rose sheer, and to get to it an old dilapidated trestle bridge had to be crossed. Our men were entrenched on that hill and ambushed the enemy party, killing two, wounding one, and capturing some rifles. On reinforcements coming up to the assistance of the enemy our troops had to retire. This happened on the 2nd February, and small patrol encounters occurred daily, until, on the 8th, our advanced detachment entered Mtarika.

The whole area from the boma to the banks of the river, a distance of fully a mile, was one stretch of

tall grass, dotted with patches of mango groves. It was not the time of year for this delicious fruit, so that we were denied the pleasure and luxury of enjoying them.

In view of the enemy still having foraging parties on our side of the river it was necessary to keep a strict watch over the "ferry" crossing. The men of the outpost had their position under a tree, the surrounding space being clear and leaving it exposed except for a couple of huts, where the natives who worked the ferry lived. Early on the morning of the 5th the Corporal in charge of the picket, while on some other duty, heard a volley of shots coming from across the river. He hastened to his post and discovered the sentry lying on the ground. On closer examination he found that the man was badly wounded through the thigh. Apparently snipers from the opposite bank had done this mischief. When the sentry was struck the other two men had rushed into the shelter of the grass, and in the attempt one of them had also been brought down with a slight flesh wound. When his companion realized what had happened, he had returned to the spot where lay the wounded man, and, under fire from the opposite bank, had carried him into the safety of the grass and had rendered first aid.

Subsequently this man was recommended by the O.C. of that detachment for some recognition. Higher authority, it was unofficially reported, made answer, "He only did what a soldier is expected to do." It is well to mention here that this Regiment did not get a single decoration!

The affair of the Lujenda outpost convinced us that the enemy was not very far off, and it was decided to send over a strong patrol daily to reconnoitre the opposite bank. The very next day the

patrol bumped into a party of ten Askaris, and fired on them, with the result that they scattered into the bush. However, their escape was not of long duration, for only three days after this same party, with twelve Tenga Tenga, surrendered to some of our men. From these we ferreted out the information that Von Lettow's camp was just a day's march on the road to Ntende. All this time there was nothing much to do, as it was necessary to wait for reinforcements before rounding up the German force. The days of leisure were spent in fishing and hunting by those who were fortunate enough to get permission, namely, the officers. One officer was out shooting one day when he saw an unarmed Native coming towards him. The native looked strange, but he showed no uneasiness when ordered by the officer to halt. Being an object of suspicion he was taken into camp and examined. It appeared afterwards that he was Abdullah, Von Lettow's cook. The news soon spread over the camp, and Abdullah became the man of the moment.

Men flocked round him and could not believe their own eyes. Surely the next wonder would be to capture the wily Von Lettow himself. The fact that the personal servant of Hauptman Muller, one of the German Staff, was captured the next day on the opposite bank added to the interest which centred in Abdullah, the very cook of the great German himself. Judging from the scraggy appearance of the latest capture one wonders what fare he provided for his master, for his cheeks were hollow, his thick protruding lips were ashy pale and his eyes sunken. He was clothed in an old sack, which hardly covered his body, and he wore a red fez. His miserable state was certainly an index to the state of the German force.

CHAPTER XVII.

ACROSS THE LUJENDA.

While waiting at Mtarika for the space of seven weeks for the purpose of re-organising our lines of communication, news reached us that the Germans, who had retreated across the Lujenda, had come in contact with our troops from Port Amelia, and received a severe trouncing. At that time they were supposed to be about 45 miles away. Learning of this latest development it was decided to push forward as many troops as could be spared. Nothing could have been more welcome to us. Mtarika was one of the hottest holes we had yet been in, and the men went down every day with sunstroke. Fever, too, became rife. There had been no rain for the past few weeks, and the swamps were drying up and becoming veritable pest-holes of mosquitoes. This was the most dangerous season of the year, consequently the field hospitals were full with dysentery and fever cases. With this state of affairs no wonder the men became despondent. In order to keep their minds occupied, and also to make shelters to protect them from the terrible heat, hut building was again resorted to. Even the consolation of a bathe was denied to us, for even if the water was pure the crocodiles were unpleasantly numerous and active in the river. In building a pontoon across the ford the pontoon had capsized and three Natives, who might otherwise have escaped, were snapped up by "croc." Then, again, bathing was not advisable, for a certain vicious fly, if it came in contact

with the body, left a germ on the skin, which entered it, and after three days developed into a boil, which, when pierced and squeezed, produced a little white maggot. We were indeed in a cruel country! Taking these things into consideration we were jolly pleased that at last the second phase of the campaign was to begin.

"C." Company, together with a platoon of "A." Company, moved out under Major F—— on March 27th to a place called Chikweyo, on the junction of the roads leading to Maslu and Nanguari, each respectively E. and N.N.E. of Mtarika.

It was a long business crossing the Lujenda. At this point the river is very wide, and an island of green rushes is set in mid-stream. Getting across necessitated the canoe being taken up the stream for a few hundred yards, being brought down again to the lower extremity of the island by the swift current. The steersman, as soon as the boat comes within reach of the foliage on the island, catches hold of some branches, thus causing the stern of the canoe to remain stationary and the prow to swing round quickly. Then the canoe is taken up stream and brought down again by the current, which finally lands it on the opposite bank. This arrangement was very unsatisfactory and a pontoon was constructed, but this having broken down the process of canoeing across had again to be resorted to. This meant hours of hard work and waste of time, as these canoes cannot take more than four men at a time, and there were only three canoes in good order. It was also a dangerous business, for only a week previous we lost five men, who were the last of a patrol of twenty to cross the river. One man lost his balance and became so excited that the canoe capsized. The unfortunate men were heavily weighted

with one hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition and pack. They were never again seen except one, who was washed up and buried a week later.

Previous to F—— crossing an order had been received from Headquarters for us to retire to Mwembe. Rumour had it that the enemy was making for Nyasaland and that we were required to hold Mlange as previously arranged. But this order was probably issued in ignorance of the fact that the Germans were coming back towards Mtarika. Major F——, however, took the responsibility upon himself to advance, and having camped on the other side of the river during the night, proceeded on his adventure, which for many days to some was a source of keen anxiety to us remaining at Mtarika. Days went by and not a single word from him. Messengers were sent, but returned without any news of this little force. Headquarters were clamouring for reports on this latest move, and threatened a hot time for F——, but still no news. On March 29th word reached us that Von Lettow, with the 3rd and 4th F.K.'s, and the Schutzers, were about twenty miles N.N.E. of Mtarika village, and that H—— was advancing on him. Thereupon a patrol of thirty men were sent out to guard a ford of the Lujenda further down the river. If the enemy were making north again that would be the only convenient place to cross the river.

Meanwhile nothing had been heard from F——, and it was decided to send a convoy to find him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A HIDDEN DANGER.

The following Sunday afternoon I was lying on my home-made bed in my kiahā, when in marched the Sergeant-Major. "The Adjutant wants to see you at once." I felt that something important must be on, so I hastened to the Orderly-Room, which was situated outside the outbuildings of the boma, and was a circular structure built of straw. Reaching there I was informed by the orderly on duty that the officer acting as Adjutant for our detachment might be found in his hut, and thither I hurried. It was what I had expected. "You will take a convoy on the Ntende road as speedily as possible; find Major F——, and report back."

Now, Ntende lay across the Lujenda, and that was the place our advance detachment was supposed to have made for. I knew that the country must be swarming with the enemy, for it was but a short time ago that they had crossed the river. I, therefore, tried to obtain all the information which could give me a knowledge of their movements, and enquired whether I was likely to "bump" them on this "stunt." He assured me that there was nothing to fear from that source, and I felt more at ease. If I had been sent to reconnoitre with just a patrol and provisions enough for it I should not have cared, but being in charge of a convoy was a real responsibility. That evening we attended divine service, which was usually held outside the Headquarters hut. I shall never forget the singing of "Lead, Kindly Light."

I felt a lump rising in my throat, but tried hard to beat down the uncomfortable feeling. I was thinking of the work that would begin in the morning.

At this stage of the campaign the Regiment was at its lowest strength, and practically all the men were without boots and proper clothing. This, apart from the question of sickness, was a great obstacle to our movements, for we could not get sufficient men for ordinary day patrols, let alone for a venture such as we were now undertaking. The required number—fourteen men—were, however, found, and we set off early the next morning under a shower of rain.

We had one hundred and fifty Tenga Tenga, each carrying a load of fifty pounds in weight. The river was about a quarter of a mile from camp. Reaching the bank we had to go through the ticklish process of "ferrying" across by means of crazy canoes. It took us just over five hours to do it, since it was a dangerous job to cross in these frail Native craft. The point is, we did get over, and that without the slightest mishap, and completed eight miles that afternoon, camping against the side of a small hill. Instructing my men to make a barricade of the sacks and boxes of provisions, I ordered the Tenga Tenga to bring in as much wood as they could. Our men usually judged the capacity of a leader, be he officer or N.C.O., by the degree of rashness with which he carried himself. They had no time for carefulness in the extreme, that savoured too much of timidity, and they showed their aversion towards such conduct in no uncertain way. Knowing all this, I was fully determined to live up to expectations and to be as seeming careless as I dared. No outpost was detailed, and, contrary to all observance of common sense, a big camp fire was soon

blazing merrily, round which we sat singing popular ditties. The Tenga Tenga were so delighted that they sent a deputation to wait upon us, requesting the "Bwana" to allow them to sit by the fire and listen to the wonderful singing. Later on they wished us to have the patience to listen to them while they sang hymn tunes. We were game, besides, any diversion was welcome. It was soon noticeable that there was a certain amount of rivalry. The carriers had arranged themselves round the fire, but kept shifting their position. Some sitting on our left would move round to the right, and others on our right would change over to the left. Still later, we could not help noticing, that while those on the left sang the others on the right merely listened, and vice versa. The shifting about of places now became significant, for on enquiring we discovered they had grouped themselves into Rhodesians and Nyasalanders. The competition soon became very serious indeed, for they abandoned their efforts at singing only and started a weird war dance in which the sounds "Zena M'Johnnie" (or something like that) appeared very frequently. The term "M'Johnnie" was used by the Natives to mean all soldiers other than Askaris. The gist of their singing was duly interpreted to us. The following is a free translation:—

“ We hate the Germanie,
But we love the M'Johnnie,
We like the Bwana Sergeant,
He gives us plenty to eat,
And small loads to carry,”
etc., etc.

All of this was, of course, mere cant, and with an eye to gaining a little more favour. Then we all

retired and rose early the next morning. The usual quarrelling among the carriers as to who should take the light loads being over after frequent appeals to me to settle these disputes, we set off once again.

At about 10 o'clock we came to the branching off of two paths. Our Ruga Ruga (of whom we had two), who were to lead us to Ntende, explained that both "roads" led to that place, but that although the left was more circuitous and less frequently used it would lead us to a bridge, whereby we might cross the Lureka River. The other would take us to a ford which we could not hope to cross, since the river would in all probability be in flood. I signalled my agreement to take the longer road, with what consequences the following paragraphs will reveal.

We experienced great difficulty that day in keeping to the path, which for long distances was just discernible. In fact we had to call several halts in order to make a "cast" to enable us to regain the path. At about noon we passed into a belt of fruit trees, growing wild. Here we had more trouble from the Tenga Tenga, who dropped their loads in order to gather fruit. This was really delicious, and I do not remember ever having eaten fruit so excellent to the palate.

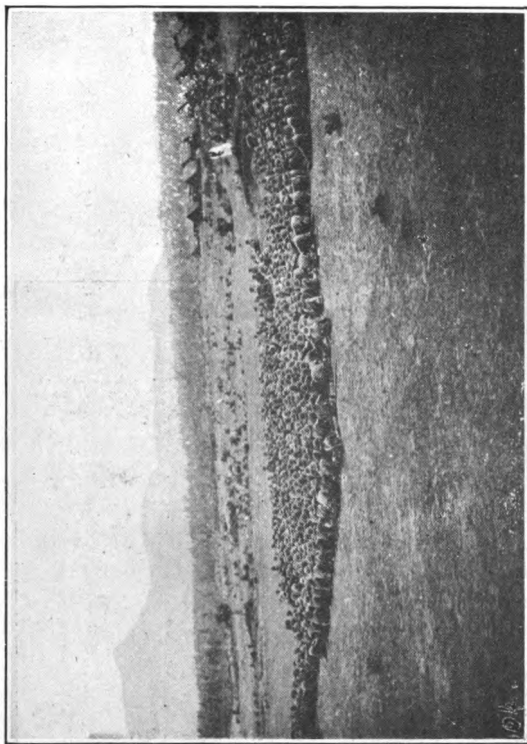
When night arrived we camped near a river, and I ordered the porters to build shelters for the stores. We were going to repeat the experiment of the night before, namely, a camp-fire concert, when it commenced to drizzle. Before the light had altogether failed I wanted to study the lay of our camp in detail, and picking up my rifle took a slow walk out of camp. I was not out very far when I heard a low, ominous rumbling not many hundreds of yards to the front. Turning my face towards that quarter of the camp occupied by the Natives I was not a bit surprised to

see the Tenga Tenga hastily closing in, grabbing a little wood and straw from the bundles they had collected and abandoning the rest. They were always very careful when lions were about, for they still remembered how on a night march through very thick grass a huge dusky form had suddenly darted from nowhere, seized an unfortunate porter and made off with him into the bush. Search was afterwards rewarded by the finding of a waist-cloth! Watching them hurrying back to camp made me alive to my own position, and, needless to say, I beat a retreat as hastily as my dignity would permit. Reaching camp I had a huge fire made. After having had a meal we retired, but there was to be no rest for us. The rain poured down in torrents and the little trenches round the bivouacs were worse than useless for keeping out the water, which now flooded in. Then, too, a possible attack from lions would have been enough to keep us awake, for it was but a short time back that lions had attacked our cattle at Luchilingo. Twenty head of cattle had been sent forward from Unango and had been attacked at night, nine being killed and the remainder dispersed. Nothing, however, happened during the night, and we resumed our quest early the next morning, reaching the Lureka River at noon on the 3rd April.

To our bitter disappointment we found the river in flood and the bridge washed away! I immediately sent back one of our runners to Headquarters with a report and went to talk matters over with the local Native Chief. Arriving there, I discovered His Majesty was not at his "palace," but digging in his garden; he would not be long if the Bwana would wait. I waited for fully half an hour, when he came towards me with all the dignity he could



" The Tenga Tenga, those fine black fellows who played so prominent a part in this campaign. . . ."—Page 6.



" Not a single Sunday went by but there was a Grand Parade of all Units for Divine Service. "—Page 33.



CAPT. McLEAN (wounded).

muster. He gave me to understand that, the river being in flood, there was no earthly chance to cross by the ford. He counselled us to bridge the first part of the river (there being two streams, divided by a small oblong island), then we should be able to wade across the second up to our necks in water.

I at once returned to camp. Where the "platform" of the ruined bridge was, stood a giant tree, whose circumference two men holding outstretched arms could not hope to cover. It was thought that if that tree could be felled in such a way that it would fall between the forked branches of another tree growing on the small island in the middle of the river an excellent bridge might be improvised. Accordingly a number of porters were set on the job of felling this tree. It was tedious work and progress was slow, for the native axe is, at best, a very inefficient tool.

Meanwhile all the other Tenga Tenga were busy making ropes and cutting timber. Twilight soon set in, and the gang engaged in cutting down the tree were still far from finished; but the work had to be done at all costs that night, for we intended to cross the river in the morning. To enable them to see a huge fire was blazing near by.

At about ten that night there was a terrific crash, and I hurried from the shelter, where sleep had overtaken me from sheer fatigue. It was the tree that had fallen, and I heaved a sigh of relief. After giving the good fellows some extra "posha" we all turned in for the night.

With the first streak of dawn we were up and eager to see the result of our labours. But we were to be disappointed again, for the mighty current of the river had carried the tree some distance down the stream, in spite of guide ropes and anchors! A half-

a-day's work undone! Just then one of the men sang "What's the use of worrying," etc., and I determined to make a fresh start. The timber which had been cut the previous day now came in handy, as we saw the possibility of constructing a trestle bridge. All hands were immediately requisitioned on this new project.

Shortly after this the Chief arrived on the scene with "presents" of pumpkins, green mealies and other vegetables. I returned the royal bounty with "presents" of salt, which he appreciated very much, and he returned to his kraal. During that day fine progress was made with the bridge. By 6 o'clock that evening the third tier (each of which was about fifteen feet in length) was nearly completed. Whilst supervising their work I was suddenly accosted by one of the Ruga Ruga, who seemed to be greatly agitated. He told me that he had suspected the Natives of the neighbouring kraal of treachery. He had seen several swim across the swollen river, and, when across, run quickly into the bush. Suspicious, he had followed one of them, and had unexpectedly come upon a camp of Askaris about two miles from the opposite bank. He estimated their strength at about seventy, and four or five whites. He had beaten a hasty retreat and now brought me the report.

If the report was true I realised immediately the danger in which the convoy stood. Evidently the polite Chief was supplying the enemy with information about us, counselling them to remain in ambush until the completion of the bridge, when our convoy could be captured without much trouble. Let it be repeated that if the report was a true one it was an astonishing disclosure. Frankly, I did not believe it, but, being on the alert, warned my informant to

keep this knowledge to himself. Should the porters come to hear of it they would dwindle away to a man during the night, and we should be stranded, true report or not.

Dusk was already setting in and we could not possibly move that night. Beside the fact that it was not customary to move at night owing to the difficult nature of the country, we were not prepared, because the fever cases had to be attended to first. This necessitated the making of four Machilas, which was no easy job. The Machila was a sort of plaited mat swung on a long pole, whose ends projected long enough to allow two porters to rest them on their shoulders.

Whilst instructions were being issued to certain Natives for making the Machilas we noticed a dusky figure on the other side gesticulating like a madman to attract our attention. He shouted that he carried an "akalata" (letter), but would not risk swimming across, so our Ruga Ruga stripped, fetched it, and brought me a small packet of waterproof sheeting, which I unfolded, uncovering a short note. It was addressed to the "O.C., Seccacorp's Convoy." Being that person I perused its contents. It begged that food be sent immediately, as the men were starving, and it bore the signature of Major F—. From the note I gleaned that he was encamped where the main "road" to Ntende crossed the Lureka—the spot we should have made for at the outset, but which I was persuaded by the runners not to do. Whether these had had a hand in the treachery we never found out.

The next morning, long before sunrise, we trekked, after having sent the sick men back to Headquarters. These were provided with two changes of

carriers, whom we could hardly spare from the convoy.

This time we placed as strong a guard as possible in the rear, and set out on our uncertain way. The air was biting cold and dew and frost lay thick on the long grass, which practically overgrew the faintly-marked pathway. With rifles slung over the shoulders we used our disengaged arms to part the dewy grass in front of us. Very soon after starting our shorts and tunic-shirts were clinging to our bodies, and, to say the least, we felt miserable. But the thought that the missing detachment had at last been located and that the men were starving strengthened our determination to reach them if possible early in the afternoon. Perhaps the unwelcome report made by the "Ruga" also helped to push us on. From the start I had determined that no halt longer than five minutes would be called, and then only for the purpose of allowing stragglers to catch up. Yes, it was to be a forced march, and forced marches in that country were horrible nightmares.

We crossed and recrossed one river at least six times at varying depths—sometimes the water reaching up to our knees and at other times up to our necks. How the poor porters managed to cross was a marvel indeed, for the banks rose sheer from six to seven feet, and many were the times when a load dropped into the river with a splash and a carrier fell backward from sheer exhaustion. This, together with the hostile attitude of the inhabitants, who frequently misdirected us, caused a deal of delay.

We had given up all hope of finding the camp, but at about noon we espied an outpost. It proved to be that of the missing detachment. We

were directed to the main camp, which lay across the river. To get over necessitated crossing by a crazy swing-bridge, which tilted dangerously to one side. It took us a considerable time to get to the other side, for really only one at a time could cross comfortably and safely. The men were delighted to see us. They were indeed in a pitiable condition. I learned from them that they had held various positions which, owing to the superior numbers of the enemy, they had been obliged to abandon. That very afternoon they had left an entrenched position about fifteen miles out, but received information that a strong force of Germans was to attack them that night. Rations had given out three days before and they now lived on green mealies, which were strictly issued one between two men. I did not make an official report of the German force which was to have ambushed our convoy since we had got through safely.

On returning to Headquarters at Mtarika with the sick men from Major F——'s camp I heard a rumour which shed a considerable amount of light on our recent adventure. A German force, answering to the description of the one of our acquaintance, had ambushed a K.A.R. convoy. According to Native report, this force, on discovering we had left the camp where we had tried to bridge the Lureka, had followed us. We, however, had had a good start and they never came up with us. The day after a K.A.R. convoy had been travelling towards Major F——'s camp, and thinking it was the one they had pursued the previous day they had ambushed it. It was customary for the Cape Corps to travel with a small rearguard of three or four men. This the Germans knew. Allowing the advance guard to pass them unmolested they had cut off the Tenga

WITH THE 2ND CAPE CORPS

Tenga and captured the convoy. However, they had miscalculated the situation. This was a K.A.R. convoy, and they invariably had a platoon to act as rearguard. On this occasion their rearguard was reinforced by a machine-gun section. Great, therefore, was the surprise of "Jerry" when the rattle of machine-guns had suddenly opened up, and abandoning his "coup" he had fled headlong in all directions, leaving a few dead and wounded behind. When I heard this report I thought what a near shave our convoy had had!

CHAPTER XIX.

FIGHTING ROUND MAHUA.

Information obtained on the 18th May revealed the fact that Von Lettow was concentrating his force, consisting then of fourteen companies, at a spot about three hours' marching west of Nanunga. According to report he evidently intended to break north, but it was uncertain what line he would take.

Our orders were "to prevent his collecting food, to harass him, destroy any small detached parties and inflict as many casualties as possible on him" in the event of his re-crossing the Lujenda. The post at Unango, consisting of one company of the Rhodesian Native Regiment and one platoon of the Cape Corps, were instructed to keep on the alert, and the officer in charge was to act on his own initiative should necessity arise. Major F—— had orders to make a forced parallel march with the enemy and head him off before he crossed the Lujenda. On the morning of May 22nd the Regiment, then composed of about one hundred and fifty effectives, was moving under Major F——, in pursuance of this order, but, owing to reports sent in the previous evening on enemy movements the advance was cautiously slow. At about 11 o'clock he received a message from the scouts to the effect that Von Lettow's main body was moving from the direction of Nanunga. Thinking that he had overtaken the enemy on the road he halted and awaited developments.. Here F—— discovered that he had ambushed, not the advance guard, but the rear guard of the enemy, which meant

that his little force was practically wedged in between two sections of Von Lettow's Askaris. Meanwhile the enemy had already engaged our other forces lower down.

The halt was on a site surrounded by three hills, placed on the corners of a triangle, thickly wooded, and not, perhaps, a tenable position. Towards the south-east lay a spruit, along which wound a foot-path which the enemy must take.

At 11.30 they came in sight and were no sooner opposite the spruit than our men, who lay concealed in the tall grass, swung round to the left, poured a few volleys into their ranks, and, with fixed bayonets, made a rush at them. An amusing incident here took place. The Tenga Tenga and machine-gun porters, not understanding the movement, and thinking that we were retiring, followed in our wake. Great was their consternation when they found themselves in the line of fire! Some, more anxious than others to get away, had even gone beyond the line of attack and found themselves among the German Askaris. Needless to say, they hastily removed themselves from their unexpected proximity to the enemy to less dangerous regions.

While this side comedy was being enacted we had made a flanking movement and encircled the enemy, who, too surprised to retaliate, surrendered. In the twinkling of an eye we took the baggage of four companies, a hundred thousand rounds of ammunition and captured thirty-seven Askaris and twenty porters.

Notwithstanding this success there was not a moment to be lost, and we withdrew and formed a "perimeter." Within a quarter of an hour the attack might be expected, and all were soon busy

entrenching. The men occupied the whole of the line facing south, and a quarter of that facing west. The ground in front sloped gently down to the spruit. The other fronts were occupied by the other troops of the column. We had about seven or eight machine-guns. These proved of great value, as the extent of the line was so great that with rifles alone we could not have hoped to repulse the enemy, and the line must have broken had we only had our rifles to depend upon.

Preparations were scarcely complete when the enemy opened fire on our front. He was determined to break through the barrier which stood between him and the southern boundary of his late colony. Seven times did he attack the frail line held by our men, and seven times he was driven to seek shelter from the hail of lead sent into his wavering lines.

The weakest link in the chain of defence was the corner facing south-west, which was held by a Lewis gun and a few rifles, and it was at this spot that the rushes of the enemy were most determined. Four times was this gun put out of action, but the gunner in charge kept cool and was able to remedy the breakdown thrice.

Opposite this corner was a huge ant-hill, at a distance of about twenty-five yards off. Once the enemy attempted to organize a charge under its cover. Expecting something of this kind to happen we were prepared to withstand the attack. They rushed towards us like madmen and came so near that one could see the ugly scowl on their faces. The situation was desperate and we prepared for the worst. At this stage the men lifted their heads a little above the parapet in order to take a more steady aim and to be quite ready when the command to fire

was given. They must have seen that we were Cape Corps, for all of a sudden they turned about, shouting, "Hapana! Hapana! Cape Corps" ("No! No! Cape Corps"), and fled headlong in panic to the shelter of the neighbouring bush. So complete was their rout that the whites had to reform them with the aid of the "chikoti."

At another part of our line a young fellow was in charge of a Maxim which had become a rather "hot" target. His officer was in a hole next to him. Whenever a sheet of lead was poured upon this gun the unfortunate officer had to lie low in a rather awkward position. This amused the gunner so much that it elicited a "What are you laughing at?" demand from that gentleman. "Laughing for Dames, Sir," lied the mischevious son of Thor. So troublesome did the enemy gun become that Adonis determined to locate it at all costs, and, raising his head a little, he swept the bush in front of him with a glance from flank to flank. This brought another "For God's sake look to your front, Adonis; we'll have the rascals down on us presently." His calm reply was, "But I am looking to the front, sir." A moment later Adonis had found what he sought. "By Jingo! I've got him, sir, and I am going to smash him!" The German machine-gun was detected in the fork of a tree not a hundred yards away. Our man leant forward, adjusted his sights, and "let drive." The next moment the Native gunner, with machine-gun and all, came tumbling down, and that trouble was at an end!

Even in the wilds of Central Africa the Germans lived up to their modern reputation of camouflage. A party of Askaris, led by a big and powerfully-built officer in British uniform, approached our line at a certain point. When he came within hailing dis-

tance one of our officers challenged him. Not receiving an answer, he again challenged him. This time the tall officer in British uniform replied, "Mimi Germanie," at the same time firing his revolver and wounding our officer. This treachery was short-lived, as the next moment he dropped with a burst of machine-gun bullets through his chest.

During the rest of the day the attack was intermittent, and so excellent were the spirits of the men that during a lull in the fighting they exchanged jokes and made fun of the whole matter. On these occasions all scrambled out of their "pans" and sat upon the parapets.

"I say, old man, throw us a topper; I can do with a smoke after this last lot," exclaims one.

"Sorry, old man, haven't one. By jove, had a near shave just now. Had a bully-beef tin on the parapet—something struck me on the side of my head—put up my hand to wipe off the blood—it was only the blooming tin which struck me," answers the other, breathlessly, while just scrambling out of his pan. And in this strain the conversation was generally carried on.

A Corporal told me that one of his men was in an awful funk, and did not needlessly wish to expose his head, which was hidden right below the parapet. He could not possibly be making use of his sights, and was firing away for all he was worth. The Corporal picked up a lump of clay and pitched it at the man, striking him on his side. He limply dropped his rifle, put his hand to his side, and piteously moaned: "O God, ik is ——" "No," interrupted the Corporal, "but you soon will be if you continue to fire that way." He was so embarrassed that he implored the Corporal not to expose him.

Early in the fight a verbal message was sent down the line. It was to enquire whether a certain man, Bredekamp, had come in. A small party had been on a listening post, and all had closed in when the attack commenced except this man. By the trick of fortune the message reached the end of the line: "Pass along the word, the Predikant has come in." Of course we were all puzzled until the matter was explained afterwards. The man, being unable to reach our line in time when the enemy opened fire, just lay where he was with the rifle fire of the enemy behind him, and machine-gun fire of our men in front. He must have had a most unhappy time! Yes, we all had a "hot" time that day, but old "George," who was a platoon Sergeant, came in for a particularly warm time. His men had cleared out all their ammunition, a fact which compelled him to leave his "pan" for the purpose of opening a fresh case. It might have been nervousness, but this box was unusually hard to open. The Sergeant-Major came to the rescue, and did his share in trying to force the case, but all to no purpose. All the time the bullets had been falling thick around them. The Sergeant-Major suggested that if a pick-axe could be found it might help. A suggestion in the army is a command. Old "George" was off like a shot to find one. After groping about for ten minutes he returned with the required implement. The case was soon forced, and ammunition dished out to the impatient warriors in the trenches. "That was the hottest time I have yet had," "George" confided to me afterwards.

The attack lasted until 7.15 p.m. Although he was in superior numbers, the enemy withdrew under cover of the darkness.

CHAPTER XX.

THE RETURN.

The enemy continued their retreat during that night in a South-Easterly direction towards the Lurio, closely pressed by our troops. Meanwhile, our detachment at Mtarika had been withdrawn. The majority of these men were poor in health and badly clothed. The march back was, therefore, done in easy stages. On their way they picked up the different posts which formed the line of communication, until they reached Mtengula once more, where they remained for about six weeks, waiting for a boat to take them to Fort Johnson. Leaving Mtengula at last on June 25th, they reached the Bar the next afternoon just as F——'s column staggered into the town, half-clad, ill-fed and sick, presenting a spectacle never to be forgotten.

This column, which had borne the brunt of the fighting on the 22nd May, had pursued Von Lettow's force a little further, at the end of which time orders to withdraw had been received. They had made a forced march to the nearest motor station, which they had reached just late enough to see the last of a returning convoy disappearing in the distance. Worn out, they had resumed their march to the Bar, and now reached it in this condition.

It did not take many days to transport the whole Battalion (except those in hospital, of whom there were many) to Blantyre, where they were partly fitted out with fresh clothing and boots, prior to returning to South Africa. In spite of rumours to the

contrary, we were returning there; for had we not seen with our own eyes draft after draft leaving for the Union? And so we put no credence in the rumours.

Arriving at Chindeo, we boarded the river boats, and sailed merrily down the current of the Zambesi until we came to the place where the Shiri River joins it. Here the rumours we had heard proved true indeed. They said that the German force was making for the Zambesi in their endeavour to get into Rhodesia. Post haste the battalion was distributed along the banks of the Shiri with orders to send out patrols, and our hopes of returning home were once more dashed to the ground.

A few months previous great floods had covered this part of the country, and it was now one vast marshy tract. Mosquitoes of abnormal size infested it. Mosquito nets were worse than useless, for these terrible creatures, nevertheless, managed to get to their inmates.

Even during daylight they were unpleasant company, and one had to carry a leaf-covered twig to switch them away from the bare knees and face. During the hours just before dawn, when we stood to arms in our greasy trenches, we experienced a hell from these persistent creatures, and were thankful when the rosy streaks of dawn lit up the horizon of the East, and relieved us from our vigil.

On July the 8th the detachment with which the writer was, sent a patrol in a north-easterly direction. This was a welcome change, because it took us away from the mosquito swamp on the river, and for a week we were comparatively free from these dreaded creatures. Although we penetrated almost

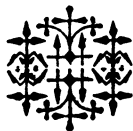
fifty miles of the country, we never caught a glimpse of the enemy, nor did we get information from the natives of their whereabouts. We therefore returned to our post.

The last night before reaching camp we spent in a kraal, where we witnessed an unusual performance. Long before evening set in the belles of the neighbouring villages congregated under a huge tree in the centre of the kraal. The young men also gathered, with native musical instruments and drums. Unobtrusively a youth wearing a black hairy cap with a long tassel made of the tail of some animal put in an appearance. About his waist was some limbo upon which hung suspended rows of hollow wooden globules filled with pebbles, which made a rattling noise when he moved. He first went round in a circular course, twisting his body most fantastically, clutching in one hand a wooden rattle. Then he made a barbaric movement, distorting his body into all kinds of shapes. Suddenly stopping, and keeping his head and legs perfectly motionless, he moved his waist so subtly that it gave one a creepy feeling to watch him. Then, advancing, he executed a series of intricate somersaults in the air, and, retreating, prostrated himself flat on the ground, lying perfectly motionless. Then, in a grand finale, he dexterously rose, and went through the same wriggling and writhing performance, only faster and faster, and suddenly disappeared inside a hut. The crowd applauded, the mystic music ceased, and darkness set in.

We remained at our post for a few weeks longer, then one day the order came to withdraw. The Zambesi scare had proved groundless, and soon all were on their way to Kimberley where the depot was.

WITH THE 2ND CAPE CORPS

Nothing remains to be told; and if these humble words have succeeded in dispelling some of the doubts concerning the utility of this Battalion, they have served the purpose for which so many long hours have been spent.



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